

 For information

>lsc

Leading learning and skills

Embedding Information, Advice and Guidance in Learning Provision for Adults

A report by the National
Institute of Adult
Continuing Education for
the Learning and Skills
Council

July 2006

Of interest to people engaged in the development
and delivery of adult IAG services across England



This research report presents the findings of a survey of embedded information, advice and guidance (IAG) provision by providers to adults in three sub-sectors: further education (FE), adult and community learning (ACL) and work-based learning (WBL). In addition to recommending actions to various interested parties, the report contains case studies of good practice from each of the three sectors.

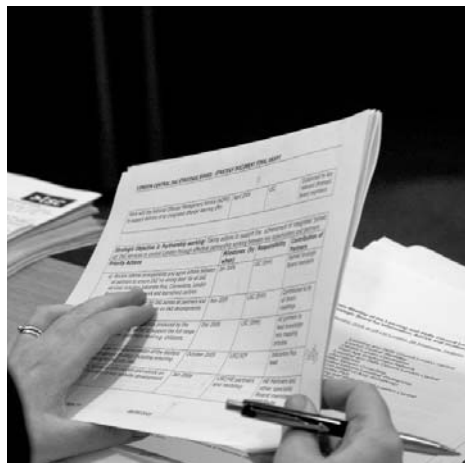
For information

This report is of interest to further education and work-based learning providers, providers in the adult and community learning and voluntary and community sectors, providers of IAG, government bodies funding the provision of IAG, and representative sector bodies including the Association of Colleges and Association of Learning Providers .

Contents

	paragraph number		paragraph number
Executive Summary	-	Section 3: Recommendations	96
Section 1: Introduction	1	Government Agencies	96
What Should Effective On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance Look Like?	1	Learning and Skills Council	96
Available, accessible and visible	2	Sector Skills Development Agency	100
Friendly, welcoming and culturally sensitive	3	Lifelong Learning UK	101
Understandable	4	Inspectorates	103
Professional and knowledgeable	5	ENTO	105
Impartial	7	Quality Improvement Agency and Learning and Skills Network	107
Effective relationships	8	Stakeholders	108
Quality assured	9	Information, advice and guidance strategic boards	108
Support achievement	11	Association of Learning Providers, Association of Colleges and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education	109
Enable progression	12	Providers	111
What do Learners Want?	14	Priority areas	111
Influencing the Learner's Experience of On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance	15	Other Areas for Review and Improvement	112
Information, Advice and Guidance and Adult Learners: A Complex Picture	16	All providers	112
Section 2: What We Found	23	Annexes	
Delivery of On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance to Adult Learners	23	A: Sources	
Overall pattern	23	B: Methodology	
The learning journey	26	C: Bibliography	
What is Offered to Whom	34	D: Case Studies	
Staffing	40	E: Acronyms and Abbreviations	
Resources	48		
Measuring the Impact	51		
Progression	59		
Quality Assurance and Improvement	68		
Benefits of High-quality Information, Advice and Guidance	70		
Matrix quality standard	70		
Inspection	74		
Enrolments	78		
Success rates	86		
Business benefits	87		
Improving the quality of the learner's experience	89		
Other issues	95		

Executive Summary



The Project

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to undertake research into the look and feel of on-programme information, advice and guidance (IAG) provision for adults in further education (FE), adult and community learning (ACL) and work-based learning (WBL). The research was carried out between August and December 2005 through desk-based analysis of existing research, a sample survey of LSC-funded providers in the three sectors and case study visits. Particular attention was paid to:

- existing approaches to service delivery
- the impact of IAG on learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression
- the benefits of accreditation to the matrix quality standard
- identification of examples of good and interesting practice.

This work has generated a substantial volume of data about many aspects of on-programme IAG for adults, which means that for the first time in England there is a statistical benchmark of how services are delivered across learning provision. It has also brought to light examples of good and exemplary practice. This work makes a significant new contribution to knowledge and understanding of adult IAG provision.

Key Findings

Typical interventions

Data suggests that a broad range of approaches is currently being used to deliver on-programme IAG to adult learners in FE, ACL and WBL. There are several specific approaches that are striking for being widely applied both within and across the sectors. The top three on-programme IAG interventions in each sector are:

- review process to confirm the learner is on the right course
- one-to-one advice or guidance interview
- progress review and/or individual learning plan.

Both the range and volume of on-programme IAG offered appear to be greater within FE than in the other two sectors.

Individual learning plans (ILPs) are the single most widely used approach in providing on-programme IAG to adults to emerge from the study. Where these are in use, they offer an opportunity for providers to encourage learners to consider and plan for progression and next steps in learning and employment.

The balance of on-programme IAG is weighted towards the on-entry and earlier stages of the programme, with very little being offered immediately prior to or post exit. This profile suggests that there is a lack of support for progression planning at the point at which learners may be most likely to require additional help.

The stage of the learning journey during which adult learners have greatest access to on-course IAG is during timetabled learning hours. A considerable degree of responsibility for delivering IAG to adults therefore lies with personal and course tutors. Measures to improve the quality of on-programme IAG offered here are likely to be the most effective and to have positive consequences for the greatest number of learners.

Effective use of staff

Providers do not always make the most effective use of available staffing to ensure that they have the capacity to deliver appropriate on-programme IAG. Non-specialists, for example teachers, tutors, trainers and assessors, play a crucial role in delivery. Providers need to have processes in place to ensure that these staff are appropriately and adequately inducted and kept up to date with changes in the field to enable them to deliver high-quality on-programme IAG to learners. Harnessing the expertise of specialist IAG staff to support non-specialist delivery is an effective way of building capacity.

Embedded delivery

Where IAG is not embedded in the learning process, the onus is on the learner to seek it out for themselves. It is therefore critical that the overall approach adopted by providers to delivering on-programme IAG includes as an integral element mechanisms to provide learners with information about when, where and how to access discrete IAG. Such mechanisms must include differentiated approaches, with IAG services and products marketed to learners on the basis of diverse anticipated needs.

Measuring impact

The impact of on-programme IAG on learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression is not widely measured by providers. Impact measurement is a complex process and providers can find it difficult to separate the specific role of an IAG intervention on learner success rates and outcomes. However, more attention could be paid to ensuring that the skills and knowledge of IAG staff are used to improve awareness of the ways in which IAG contributes to engagement, retention, achievement and progression. Developing rigorous systems to capture and measure impact data from a range of sources would enable organisational analysis to be fed into strategic planning, self-assessment and planning for quality improvements.

Progression

In the later stages of the learning programme, providers do not adequately facilitate the progression of adult learners through on-programme IAG. Among ACL and WBL providers in particular, there appears to be a significant minority which provide very little support, including individualised support, to enable adults to develop the skills and knowledge they need for successful progression in learning and work.

Quality assurance

Mechanisms for quality assurance and quality improvement appear to be inadequate in many organisations. Too few providers are drawing on evidence from a range of sources to support both quality assurance and improvement. However, where data is collected by providers about the delivery of on-programme IAG, it appears to be used more for quality assurance than for quality improvement. There is particular scope for further use to be made of feedback from both learners and employers to inform quality improvement.

Matrix quality standard

Accreditation to the matrix quality standard (matrix) has brought benefits to provider organisations. Benefits may not be perceived by staff as being directly attributable to matrix, and the evidence suggests that little specific effort is being made to measure the benefits of matrix accreditation. Nevertheless, there are examples of providers who testify to the introduction of matrix having had a significant positive impact across their organisation, and specific cases from both FE and WBL are included in the study. Working towards matrix is credited with driving improvements in the process and delivery of IAG for adult learners and thereby contributing to improvements in success rates and inspection results.

Summary of Recommendations

Government agencies

Learning and Skills Council

- Consider whether appropriate incentives need to be put in place nationally to achieve a more equitable distribution of IAG across the learner pathway and to support progression.
- Consider how providers can be supported to measure more effectively the impact of on-programme IAG on learner enrolments and success rates.
- Ensure that relevant findings from this study inform the development and piloting of New Measures of Success.
- Consider how the main findings and good practice from the study can be disseminated to support quality improvements in IAG embedded in learning.

Sector Skills Development Agency

- Consider how the relevant findings and good practice can be disseminated to support sector skills councils in the development of their IAG provision and staff development activities.

Lifelong Learning UK

- Ensure that the role of teachers, tutors and trainers in delivering IAG is taken into account in developing the benchmark qualification Qualified Teacher, Tutor or Trainer in the Learning and Skills Sector (QTLS), and any other awards.
- Consider how continuing professional development could be used better to equip staff to deliver IAG.

Inspectorate

- Use the findings from this study to inform how guidance and support, both formal and informal, is inspected.
- Supplement the guidance on inspection given to providers with specific guidance on the inspection of embedded IAG.

ENTO

- Map the links between the self-assessment process and matrix.
- Take steps to increase matrix penetration in work-based learning.

Quality Improvement Agency and Learning and Skills Network

- Ensure that the role of IAG in supporting adult learners is reflected in research and development activities.

Stakeholders

Information, advice and guidance strategic boards

- Undertake a review of on-programme IAG services and products delivered by members in their local area (for example, mock interviews, skills audits, job readiness checks and so on) to identify both gaps and unmet needs, and ways of broadening access for adult learners.

Association of Learning Providers, Association of Colleges and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

- Disseminate the findings of this study to members and networks.
- Encourage members to share good practice to improve the delivery of IAG to adults in their sector.

Providers

Priority areas

To increase consistency in the delivery of IAG embedded in learning and to support progression, providers need to give particular attention to:

- ensuring that the induction process and continuing professional development for all staff involved in the delivery of IAG includes:
 - an introduction to their roles and responsibilities in relation to IAG
 - regular updating of skills and knowledge in relation to entry to the workplace and further learning
 - information about discrete local IAG provision to which they can refer learners
 - awareness of the boundaries of their own skills and knowledge
 - having appropriate processes in place to ensure that all learners are invited to consider their next steps towards the end of their learning programme and are made aware of sources of further information.

Other areas for review and improvement

Capacity

Providers should assure that they have the capacity to:

- provide appropriate individual IAG, particularly for vulnerable learners who need support with progression
- deliver sufficient IAG pre- and post exit to support progression, particularly where further learning or employment plans are not fulfilled.

Delivery

Providers should assure that:

- the skills and knowledge of specialist IAG staff are being sufficiently harnessed to support learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression
- availability and effectiveness of their on-programme IAG services and products for adult learners
- an appropriate balance of IAG to support decisions on both learning and work is available either embedded in programmes or through referral to internal or external specialists
- staff are aware of good practice in embedding work- and learning readiness into learning programmes
- they consider what steps could be taken to integrate readiness approaches into their provision
- course information is tailored to the needs of adults and includes information on progression options.

Progression

Providers should assure that:

- tutors are aware of the main progression routes from their provision, taking into account lateral progression as well as vertical routes, and are using this to inform next step discussions with learners
- new technologies are being used effectively to provide information on progression to adult learners, particularly where there is a clear progression pathway.

FE providers should pay particular attention to:

- providing adequate IAG to support progression by adult learners on part-time programmes
- training and supporting tutors in the delivery of on-programme IAG.

ACL providers should pay particular attention to:

- helping adult learners develop the skills to make and act upon decisions about learning and work
- where appropriate, preparing and supporting learners with progression into work
- adequately training and supporting subject tutors in the delivery of on-programme IAG
- assuring that the range of approaches taken to delivering on-programme IAG is adequate to meet the diversity of learners' needs.

WBL providers should pay particular attention to:

- assuring that learners have access to the services of specialist IAG staff as necessary, through either the development of in-house expertise or referral
- assuring that staff delivering embedded IAG are able to access adequate and appropriate support from specialist IAG staff, either internally or externally
- reviewing whether their staff handbook could be better used to support staff delivering embedded IAG
- reviewing whether greater use could be made of ICT to deliver IAG to adult learners outside timetabled learning hours
- ensuring that learners are adequately and appropriately supported to plan for progression to further learning.

Section 1: Introduction

What Should Effective On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance Look Like?

1

The list below sets out the core principles that should underpin effective on-programme IAG for adults. It is based upon the principles of coherent IAG service delivery incorporated in the national policy framework and action plan, (DfES, 2003) with additions and amendments for the present study to reflect the principles of effective IAG embedded in learning.

Available, accessible and visible

2

Providers need to ensure that services are adequately publicised across all sites and through appropriate media and formats. Relevance is important: services need to be advertised at the point they are needed by adult learners. Specialist IAG services need to be open at times and in places that suit clients' needs, and have convenient, easily recognisable entry points from which clients may be signposted or referred to the services they need. Service availability and marketing need to be informed by monitoring take-up and user profile.

Friendly, welcoming and culturally sensitive

3

Flexibility in where, how and when the service is provided is important to meet individual need. Less confident adult learners may need additional support or encouragement to engage successfully with the assistance provided. Access to confidential interviewing space will be important for some learners. Strategic planning should take account of the contribution IAG provision can make to widening participation and raising aspirations, particularly of under-represented groups. Targeting and delivery of IAG provision should reflect institutional

commitment to equality and diversity and the range of IAG services as well as the diversity of learners' needs.

Understandable

4

Providers should have a written entitlement that specifies which services adult learners can access, what they should expect from the service and how the entitlement is to be monitored and appropriate action taken. This commitment should be made available to adult learners using suitable formats and media. Results from the monitoring need to inform targeting and future planning.

Professional and knowledgeable

5

A wide range of staff is involved in the delivery of embedded IAG for adult learners. Providers need to be clear about who these members of staff are and ensure that, through induction and ongoing staff development processes, they are aware of their role, personal responsibilities and limitations in relation to IAG, and are able to make an adequate diagnosis of learner needs to refer on as appropriate. If the IAG expertise required is not available internally, staff should be able to signpost to external sources such as learndirect and nextstep.

6

Frontline and reception staff should have the skills and knowledge to identify quickly and effectively the client's needs and/or to signpost or refer them to internal sources of help or suitable alternative provision.

Impartial

7

Providers should support clients in making informed decisions about learning and work based on their needs and circumstances. The provider's mission, vision, ethos, policy statements and procedures need to support the client-centredness of the provision. Appropriate measures (such as screening applications, sampling documentation, performance monitoring and so on) and procedures such as referral need to be in place to ensure learners are being informed of the range of options available to them.

Effective relationships

8

Partnership working in the community and progression planning with other providers will increase the likelihood of the range of an adult learner's needs being met. Developing effective relationships offers the opportunity to put in place confidence-building measures to support progression. Links between IAG services should be clear from the client's perspective. Less confident adult learners may need assistance in moving between sites and providers.

Quality assured

9

Achieving consistency in on-programme delivery is a major challenge for providers where this is delivered primarily through non-specialist staff, focusing on teaching, learning and assessment. An appropriate range of measures should be in place to increase consistency and enhance delivery, where possible drawing on support from central IAG services, such as systematic and standardised approaches to induction, training and documentation, and quality assurance processes such as observations of interviews and tutorials.

10

Learners need access to an appropriate range of on-programme IAG interventions to support their choices in learning and work, which will need to be informed by up-to-date labour market information and social and economic priorities.

Support achievement

11

The skills and knowledge of IAG workers can make an important contribution to enhancing the engagement, retention and achievement of adult learners. Senior managers and curriculum leaders need to harness these skills where appropriate.

Enable progression

12

Account needs to be taken by staff involved in the IAG process of service users’ longer term learning and employment-related goals both on entry and in progression planning to ensure the best match is made in choices of learning programmes. An early assessment of the learner’s skills enables other actions to be taken to increase their employability in their chosen field.

13

Providers should encourage and support clients to become lifelong learners by ensuring that the opportunity exists for all learners to consider their next steps. Learners should be able to access information to plan their careers and consider further learning options.

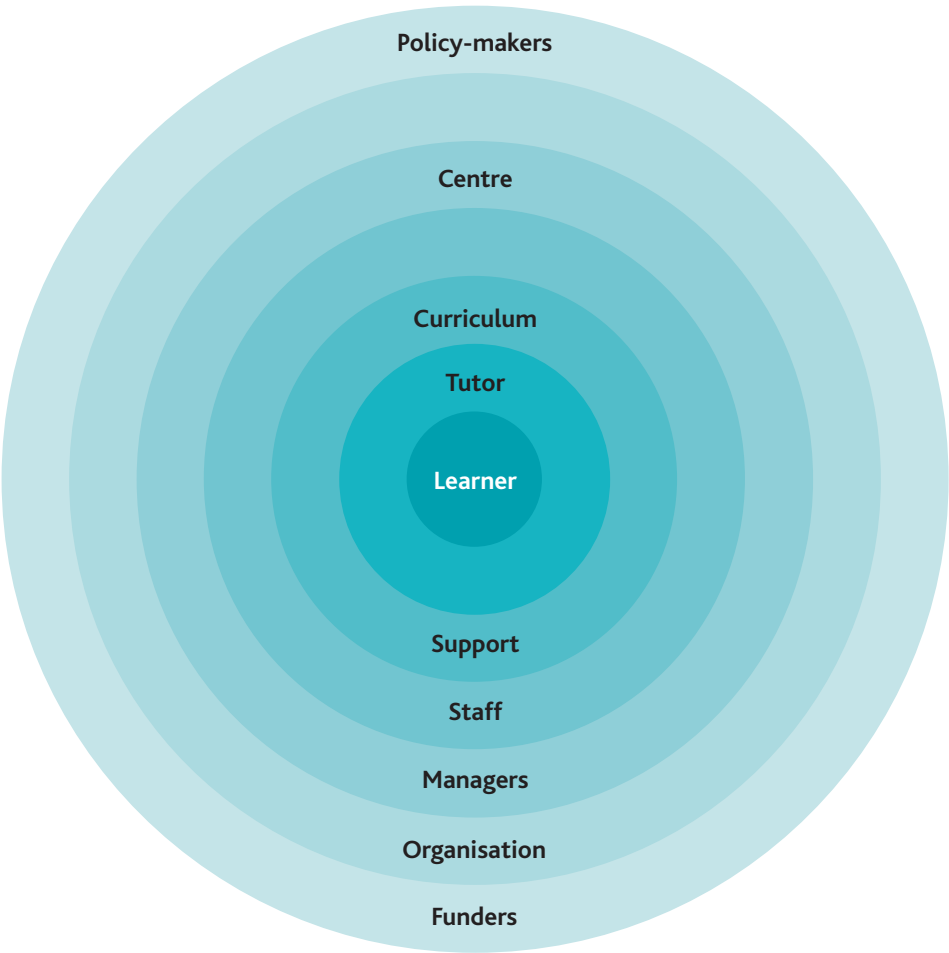
What do Learners Want?

14

During the course of our research, opportunities were taken for discussion with learners about the IAG provided to them on-programme. The majority of those interviewed were pre-level 2 learners. The aspects of IAG provision that learners identified as most valuable were:

- flexibility to accommodate individual needs
- one-to-one contact so that they felt that their individual needs had been appropriately diagnosed and met
- having continuing access to staff providing IAG both on-programme, so that any problems that arose could be addressed, and post exit to discuss other options
- measures to increase confidence in their programme selection as they progress, such as meeting the tutor, attending a class before enrolling and taster sessions
- practical assistance when transferring between centres or locations, such as help with sorting out transport or being accompanied to a new site.

Figure 1: Influences shaping the learner’s experience.



Note: Adapted from Limb (1992)

Influencing the Learner's Experience of On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance

15

How on-programme IAG is actually experienced by adult learners is shaped by a wide range of factors reflecting policies and practices implemented at both operational and strategic levels. Figure 1 (Limb, 1992: pp. 166–78) illustrates levels of intervention that affect the learner's experience, and their relation to the individual learner. As Figure 1 illustrates, from the learner's point of view the most critical and keenly felt relationship is that which they have with their tutor. It is here that the quality of the learner's experience is fundamentally determined. Therefore any attempt to bring about change in on-programme IAG provision, whether through strategic or operational means so that it better meets the needs of learners, must have as its primary consideration the practical impact that such intervention will have at the interface between learners and tutors. In framing our recommendations in this report we have adopted this avowedly "bottom-up" approach: actions required of policy-makers, stakeholders and providers are informed by our analysis of what needs to happen at the point of learning.

Information, Advice and Guidance and Adult Learners: A Complex Picture

16

The principles and patterns set out above are crucial, but they can make the issue of IAG and adult learners appear deceptively straightforward. Intervening successfully to bring about improvements in IAG provision demands understanding and appreciation of the complexities of both on-programme IAG and adult learners.

17

In the first place, many staff across each of the three sectors under consideration contribute to IAG, not just IAG specialist staff and tutors. For example, those involved in reception services, marketing, recruitment and selection may also deliver IAG. In addition, there is a myriad of support and professional staff whose work has a guidance dimension and whose activities are likely to impact upon learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression. These include work-based learning assessors, adult education centre heads, counsellors, learning mentors, student liaison officers and retention officers, all of whom will be involved in supporting learners perceived to be at risk of dropping out.

18

Furthermore, adult learners as a group, as well as the education sectors they chiefly inhabit, the types of learning they undertake, and the ways in which they learn, reveal a considerable degree of variety.

19

In 2004–05, there were 3.48 million learners aged over 19 in further education (FE) in England (84 per cent of all FE learners), 889,800 (97 per cent) in adult and community learning (ACL) and 158,100 (30 per cent) in work-based learning (WBL). Whilst almost all adults on WBL programmes were under 30 years of age, the majority of those in FE were over the age of 30 and 26 per cent of adult learners in ACL were over 60. Approximately two-thirds of adults in FE and WBL provision were on programmes at Level 2 or below (LSC, 2005).

20

The picture of adult participation in learning is both significantly different from and more diverse than that of the under-19s. Most adult learners study part time, including 85 per cent of those in FE (NIACE, 2005). Their learning takes place in a wide range of settings and not just the classroom. For example, a national review of adult learning plans (Merton, 2001) indicated an average of 70 settings per local authority. Adult learning venues include college outreach centres, the workplace and a variety of community settings such as community centres, village halls, pubs, working men's clubs, schools, health centres and mobile classrooms. Since 1999, there has also been a significant increase in delivery with and through partners as part of widening participation strategies. These partners' core business may not be in education and training.

21

Adult learning is also characterised by the breadth of its curriculum, including programmes that are long and short, academic and vocational, accredited and non-accredited, and a significant proportion of which have as their aim personal fulfilment or community development. Unlike other education sectors, teaching staff in adult learning predominantly work part time. The adult learning workforce has been largely unregulated, and there are currently no comprehensive data on the qualifications held by tutors.

22

Added to these considerations must be the recognition that most adults take part in learning voluntarily. Their motivations for participating in education or training are often more complex and personal than those of young people. On-programme IAG must be capable of responding appropriately to variety and individual need.

Section 2: What We Found

Delivery of On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance to Adult Learners

Overall pattern

23 Respondents to the NIACE survey of providers were asked to indicate what kinds

of on-programme IAG interventions were offered to adult learners in their organisation. Figure 2 summarises the responses from each sector.

24 Figure 2 suggests that there is a wide range of approaches being used to deliver on-programme IAG to adult learners in FE, ACL and WBL. Several approaches are striking

for being widely applied both within each sector and across all three sectors. Indeed, it is possible to identify a top three that were cited by over 80 per cent of respondents from each sector, the results for which are set out in Table 1.

25 Progression or next step reviews were also widely cited, although less so by WBL

Figure 2: Proportion of FE, ACL and WBL providers surveyed offering each type of on-programme IAG intervention to adult learners.

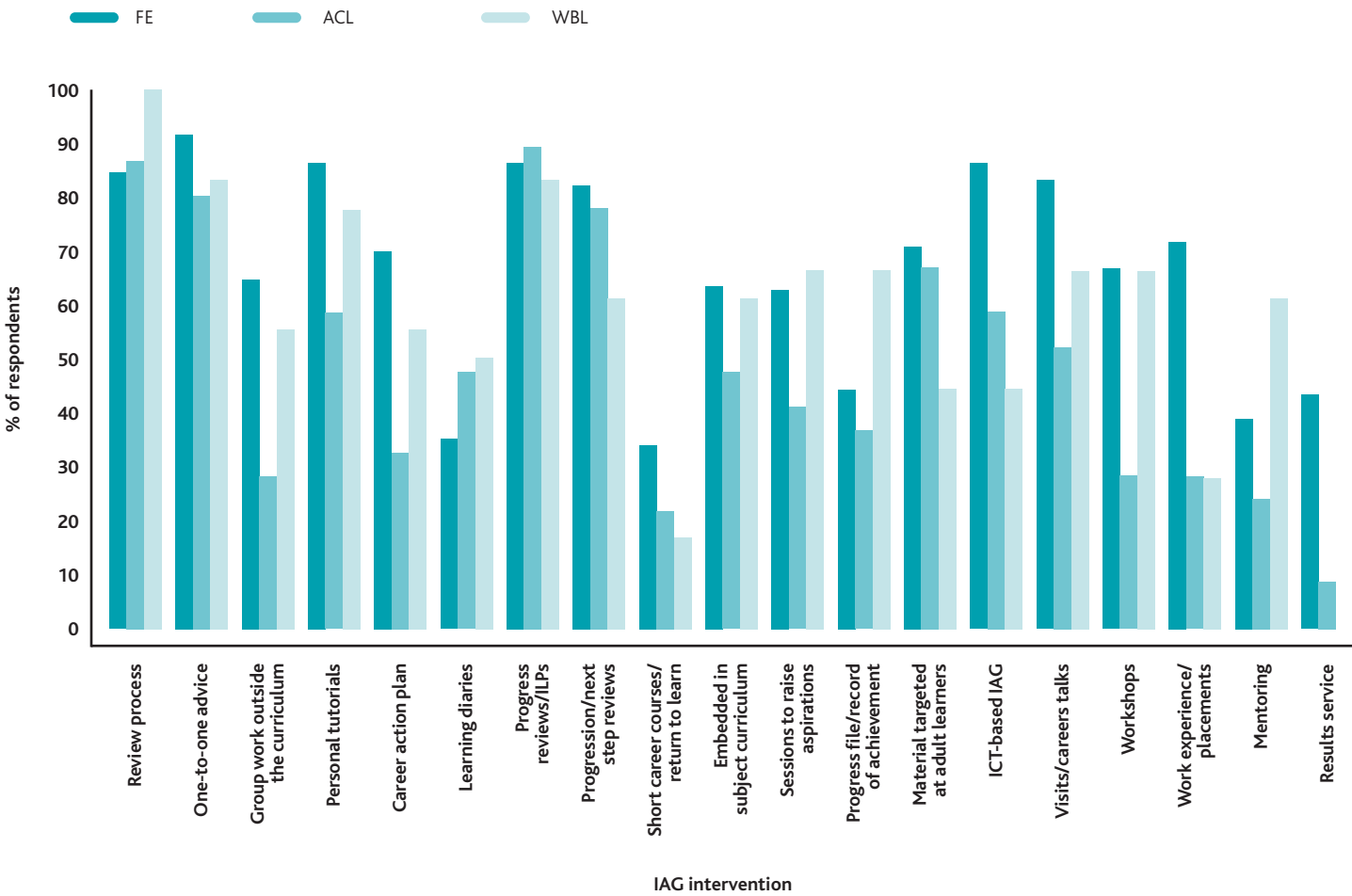


Table 1: Three most frequently cited on-programme IAG interventions across all sectors, by percentage of respondents citing them.

On-programme IAG intervention	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)
Review process to confirm learner is on the right course	85	87	100
One-to-one advice and guidance interview	92	81	83
Progress review or individual learning plan	86	89	83

providers, whilst personal tutorials emerged as an important means of delivering on-programme IAG in FE and WBL. In addition, more than 80 per cent of FE providers in the sample offered ICT-based IAG and visits or careers talks to their adult learners. The overall pattern suggested by the data is that FE providers offer a greater volume of on-programme IAG provision for adults than the other two sectors. Case Study 3 from Bury College offers an example of the diversified ways in which IAG can be provided on-programme through specialist staff working with tutors. Within ACL in particular, whilst a wide range of approaches was offered by providers across the sample, less than half of these were cited by more than 50 per cent of respondents.

The learning journey

26

More specifically, respondents were asked to state what on-programme IAG interventions were offered during different phases of the learning journey:

- on entry
- at induction
- during timetabled learning hours
- outside timetabled learning hours
- immediately prior to exit
- post exit.

27

The results of this strand of the research are set out in Figures 3a to 3f.

28

These findings suggest that the period of study when adult learners have greatest access to IAG is during timetabled learning hours. For learners in FE, personal tutorials emerged as the most frequently offered source of IAG. Around three-quarters of all respondents across the three sectors stated that they were using progress reviews or individual learning plans (ILPs) as a means of delivering IAG at this stage of the learning pathway, making this the single most widely applied approach to emerge from the survey. Whilst ILPs differ between the sectors, they should be working documents, owned by learners and regularly reviewed. Where a section on next steps is included, they can also offer a focus for discussions about progression.

Figure 3a: On entry: Proportion of respondents offering each IAG intervention to adult learners.

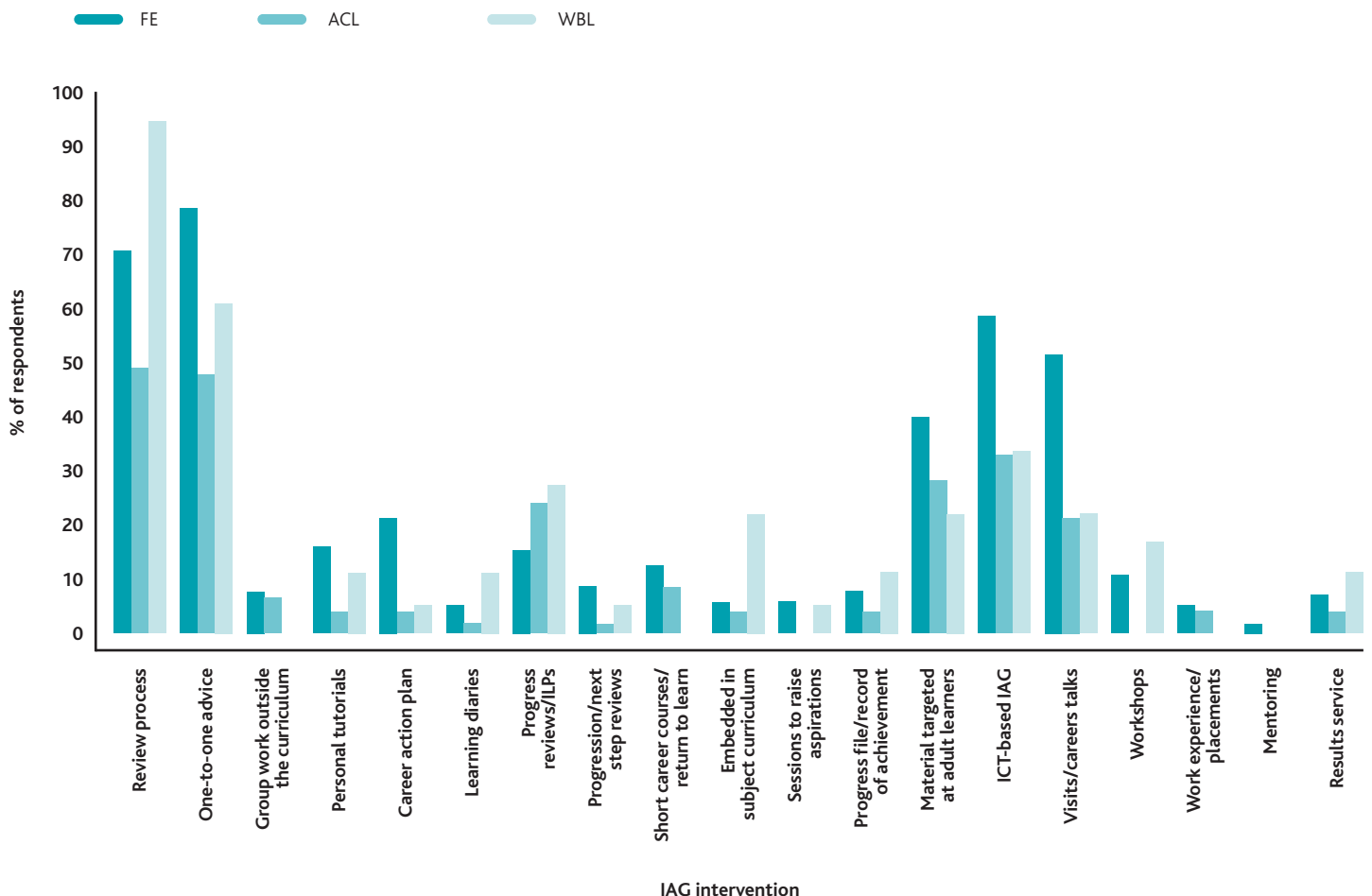


Figure 3b: Induction: Proportion of respondents offering each IAG intervention to adult learners.

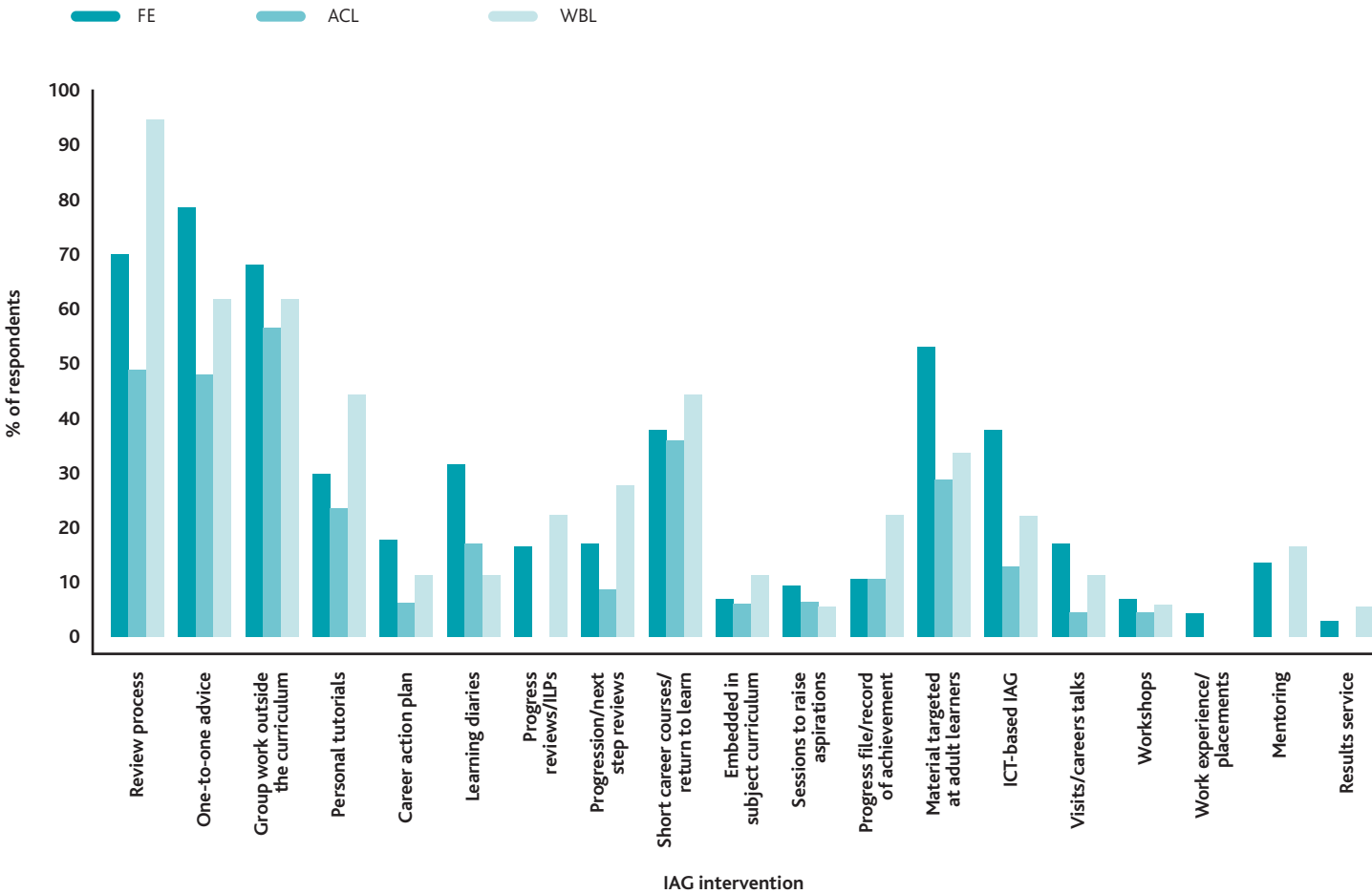


Figure 3c: During timetabled hours: Proportion of respondents offering each IAG intervention to adult learners.

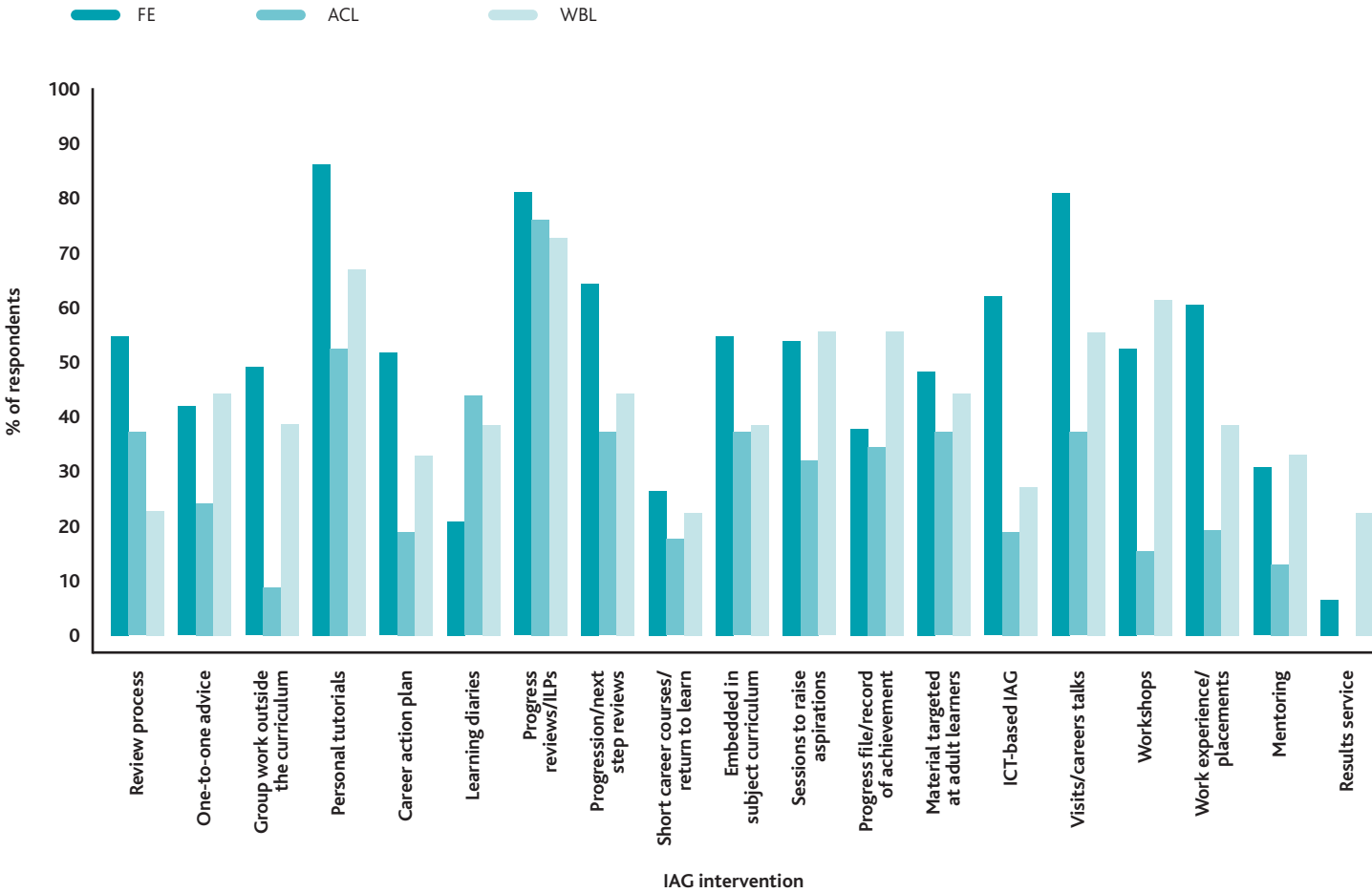


Figure 3d: Outside timetabled hours: Proportion of respondents offering each IAG intervention to adult learners.

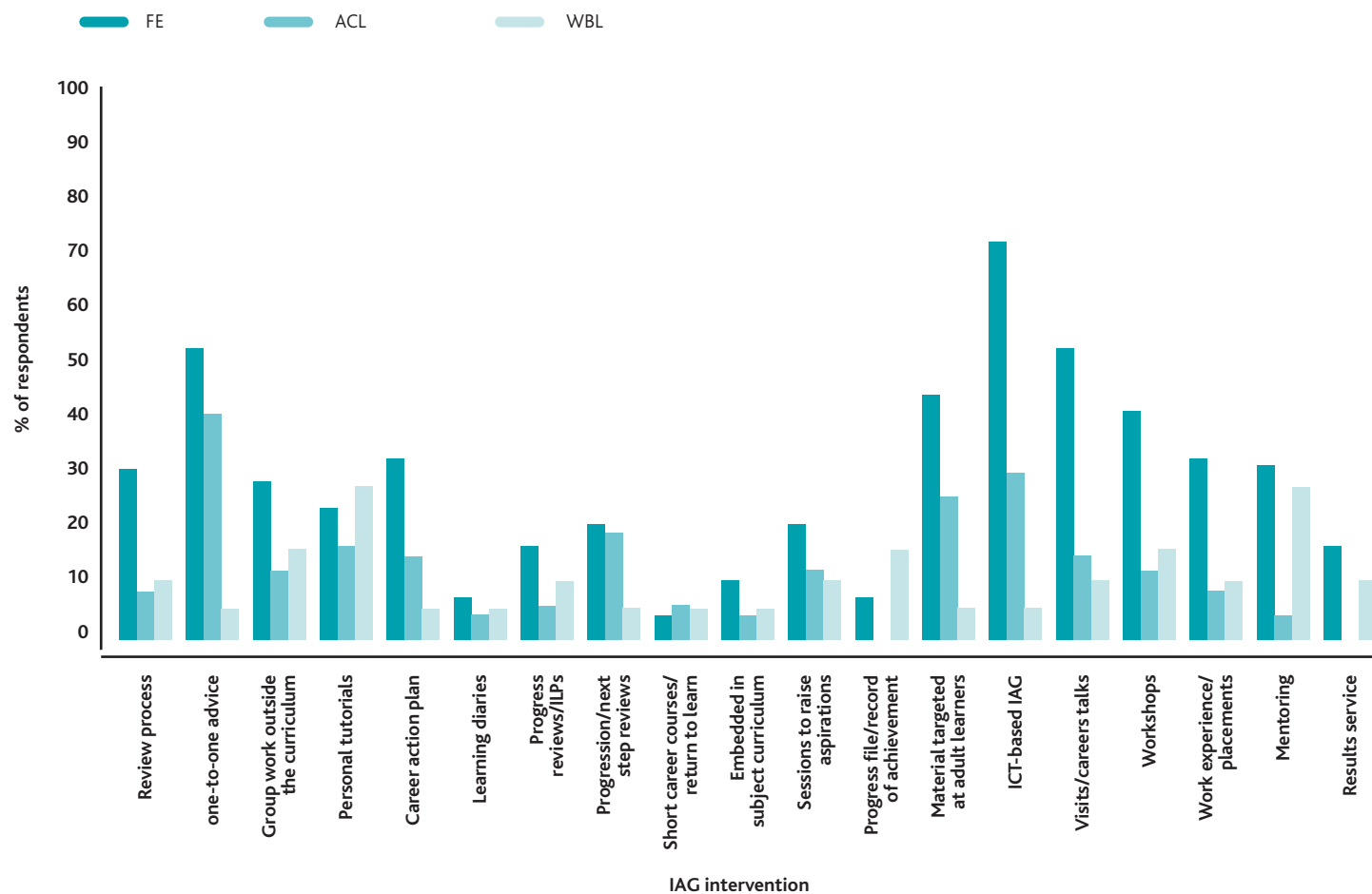


Figure 3e: Prior to exit: Proportion of respondents offering each IAG intervention to adult learners.

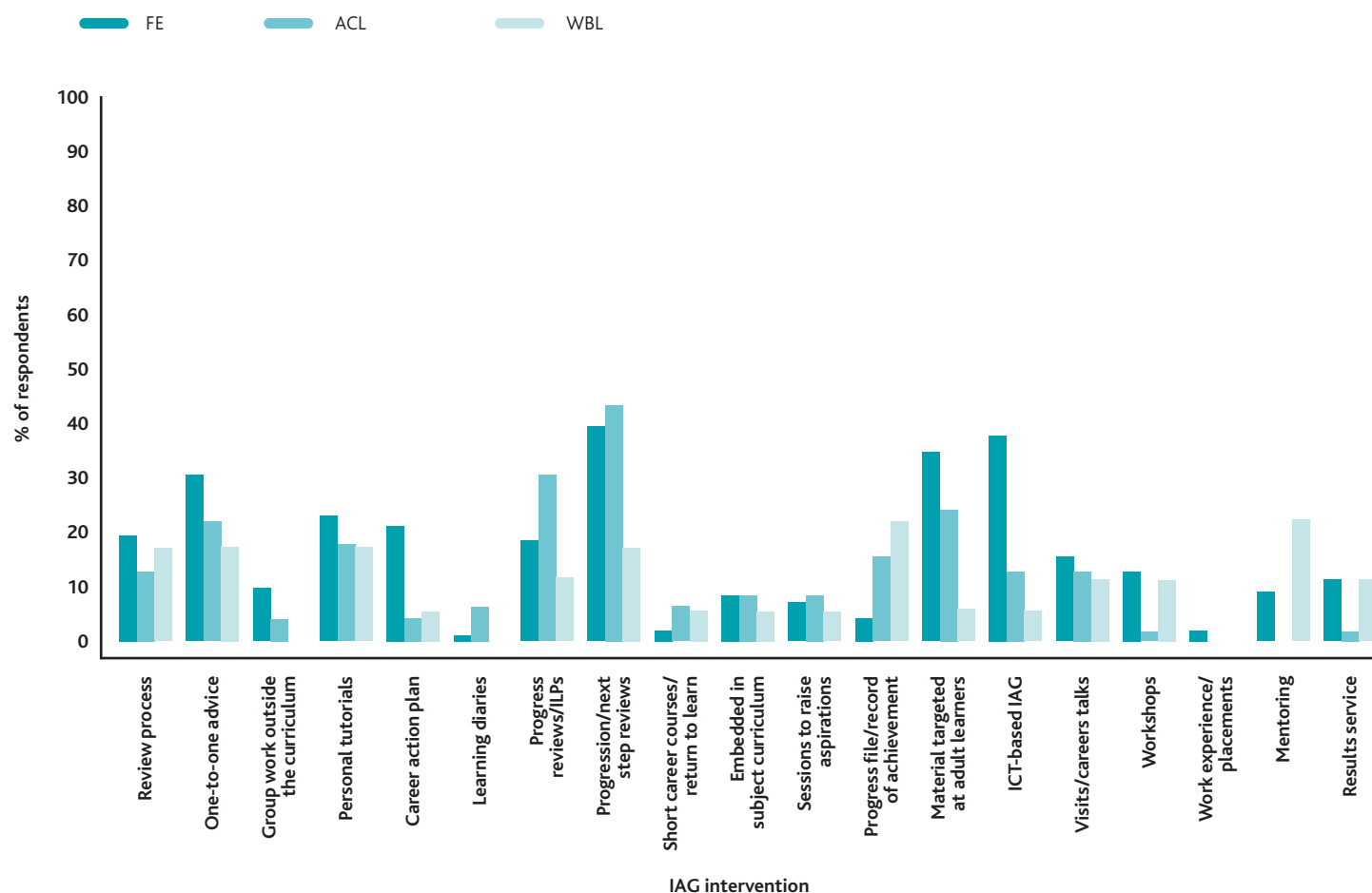
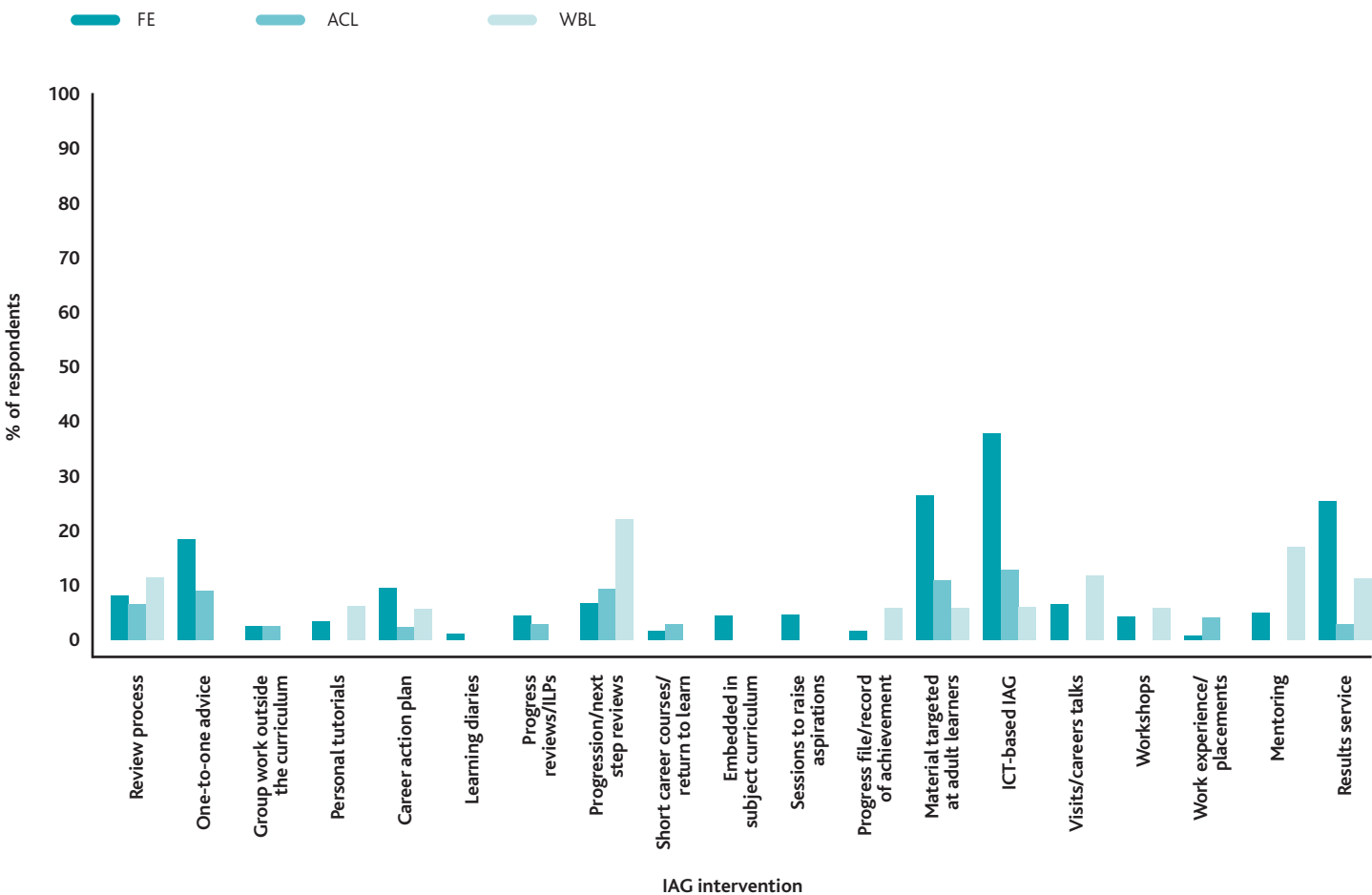


Figure 3f: Post exit: Proportion of providers offering each IAG intervention to adult learners post exit.



29 It also appears that a striking degree of frontloading is taking place, with the range and volume of IAG offered to adults towards the end of their course being extremely low in all sectors. The extent of this phenomenon is graphically illustrated in Table 2, which identifies those IAG interventions cited by more than 50 per cent of respondents from each sector at each stage of the learning journey.

30 The chief reason for this pattern of IAG delivery may be that an important strategy, perhaps the main strategy, adopted by providers to try and ensure high retention and achievement rates has been to develop mechanisms to check that the learner is

enrolled on the right programme from the start. Much of the initial development work in IAG to improve retention and achievement has related to the pre-entry and on-entry stages of the learner pathway, through approaches such as diagnostic initial assessment and in-depth selection procedures. In FE, ACL and WBL, there has been an increasing focus on this type of IAG, partly in response to criticism about recruitment and selection from the Adult Learning Inspectorate (Sadler, 2002; ALI, 2002).

31 These findings raise a number of concerns about what is available to learners both outside timetabled learning hours and especially at the end of their programme of

study. Nothing was routinely offered across any of the sectors surveyed. FE appears to offer the greatest volume and range of such IAG provision, although it is remarkably low in most cases. One-to-one advice, ICT-based provision and visits or talks were all reported by more than half the respondents from FE as being available to learners outside timetabled learning hours. But it is not clear whether these interventions were being offered proactively or whether the onus was on the learner to seek out and access the provision.

32 The same may be said of the one-to-one interviews and ICT-based provision that around a third of FE respondents cited as being available immediately prior to exit. At

Table 2: IAG interventions offered to learners at each stage of the learning journey by more than 50 per cent of respondents, by sector.

Stage of learning journey	FE	ACL	WBL
On entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process • One-to-one advice or guidance interview • Materials targeted at adult learners 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process • One-to-one advice or guidance interview
At induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process • Materials targeted at adult learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process
During timetabled learning hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process • Personal tutorial • Progress review or ILP • Progression or next steps review • Embedded in subject curriculum • Sessions to raise aspirations and motivation • ICT-based IAG • Visits, career talks, external speakers • Workshops • Work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal tutorial • Progress review or ILP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal tutorial • Progress review or ILP • Sessions to raise aspirations and motivation • Progress file or record of achievement • Visits, career talks, external speakers • Workshops • Work experience
Outside timetabled learning hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one advice or guidance interview • ICT-based IAG • Visits, career talks, external speakers 	-	-
Immediately prior to exit	-	-	-
Post exit	-	-	-

this stage of the learning journey, approximately 40 per cent of FE and ACL providers in the survey sample stated that they offered progression or next step review. This figure indicates the continued importance of curriculum-based IAG, but also suggests that a worryingly large number of providers are taking few steps actively to support their learners to plan for further learning or work.

33

In the post -exit phase, very little is offered by respondents from any of the three sectors, although again there appears to be a slightly higher level of activity in FE. A quarter of FE providers stated that they provide a “results” service, and around 30 per cent that they continue to offer ICT-based IAG. Less than 20 per cent offered one-to-one guidance interviews to their former students, a figure which gives cause for real concern. Learners whose plans fall apart or change after they leave college

may need access to more, and more in-depth, help than they are currently able to receive. Case study research revealed an exemplary post-programme support service developed by Lewisham College called Guidance Until You No Longer Require Us (GURU). As part of its commitment to support learner progression, grounded in the ethos that the learner is on a journey, the college offers an open-ended programme of support to former students who are unsure of their next steps or need to consider a different direction.

What is Offered to Whom

34

Figures 4a to 4c set out findings from the survey about which categories of learners are able to access different kinds of IAG provision in FE,ACL and WBL.

35

Figures 4a to 4c give a more nuanced picture of the findings discussed under paragraphs 26 to 33 above. There are relatively few circumstances in which anything approaching a universal entitlement can be identified. In WBL, 94 per cent of respondents offered a review process to learners to confirm that they were on the right course, whilst over 70 per cent offered one-to-one advice, personal

tutorials and ILPs. Two-thirds used progress files or records of achievement.

36

Nearly three-quarters of respondents from FE reported that ICT-based IAG was available to all learners, but the only other approaches that were offered to all learners by over half the FE providers in the sample were a review process (52 per cent) and one-to-one advice (57 per cent). The evidence suggests that entitlement to different kinds of on-programme IAG in FE tends to be closely linked to the number of guided learning hours (glh) for the programme on which the learner is enrolled. This feature of on-programme IAG in FE has particular implications for adult learners, who are predominantly on part-

time provision and may receive no additional tutorial provision beyond the support offered by their subject tutor during class time. As discussed above, personal tutorials were cited by respondents as a crucial mechanism for delivering IAG in FE. Yet closer examination of the survey returns reveals that in only around a third of cases were these offered to all learners whilst over a quarter offered them to full-time learners only. Similar figures emerge for ILPs and progression and next step reviews.

Figure 4a: Categories of learners to which different IAG interventions are offered in FE (proportion of providers offering each intervention, by category of learner).

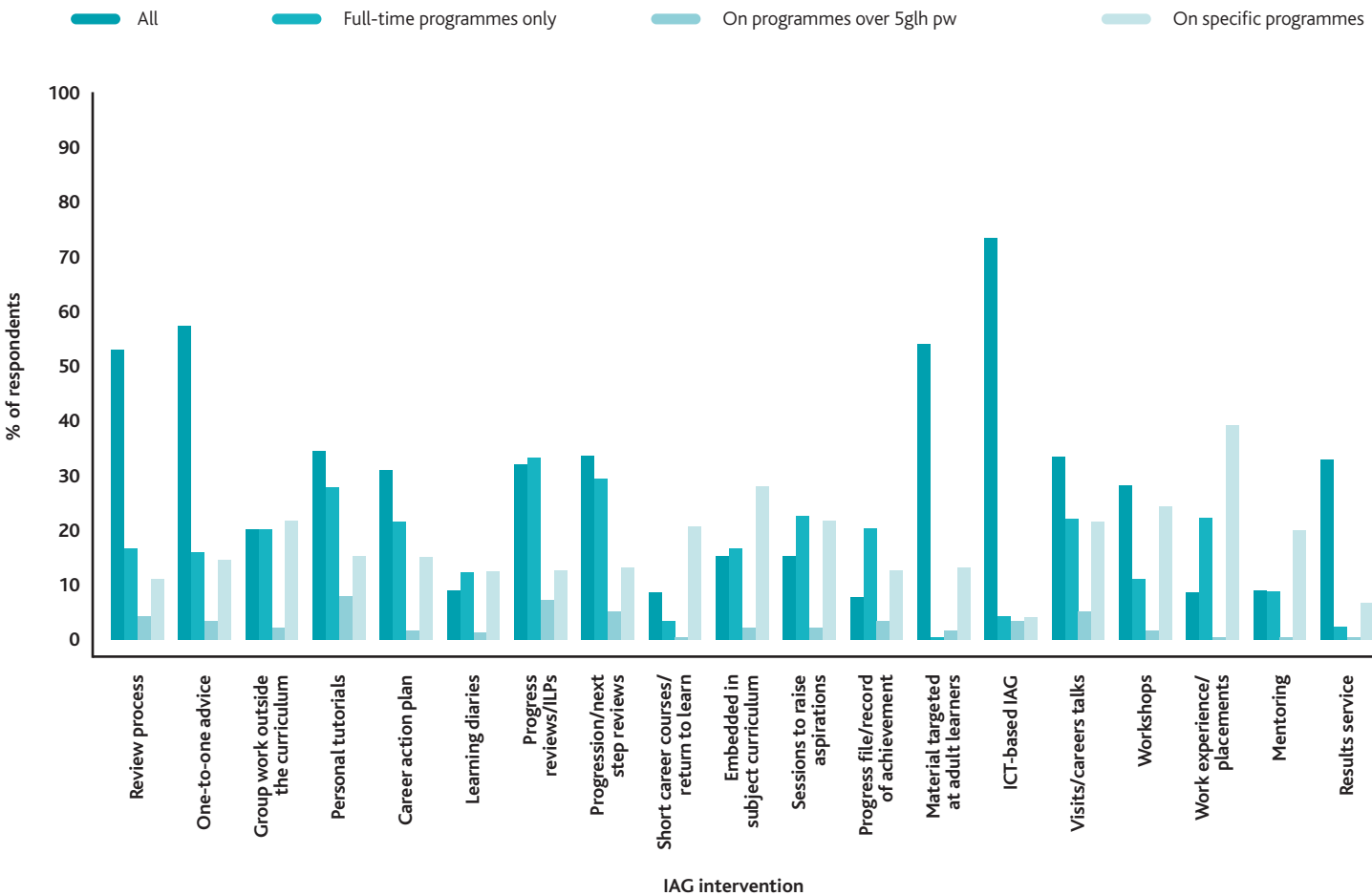


Figure 4b: Categories of learners to which different IAG interventions are offered in ACL (proportion of providers offering each intervention, by category of learner).

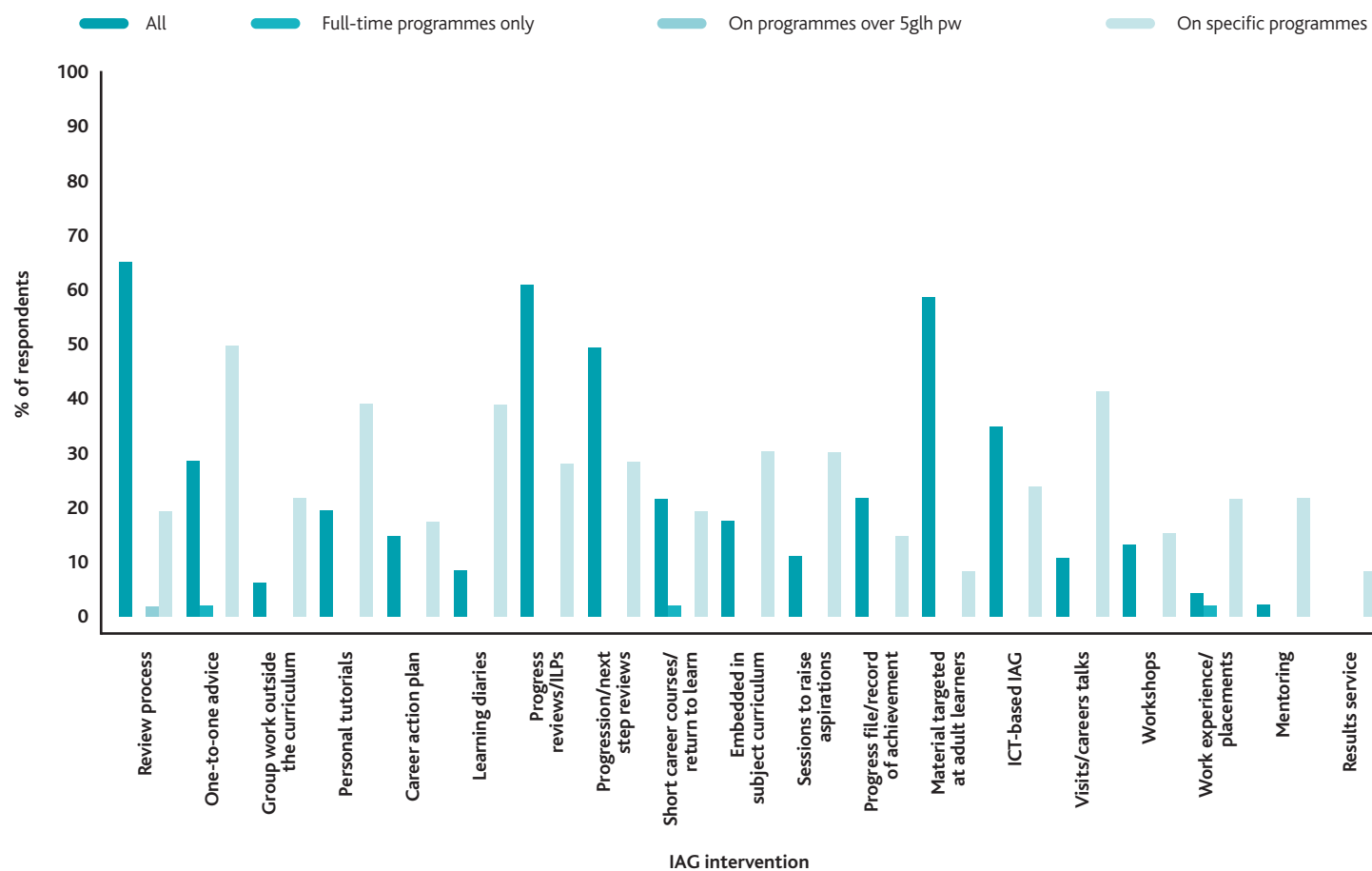
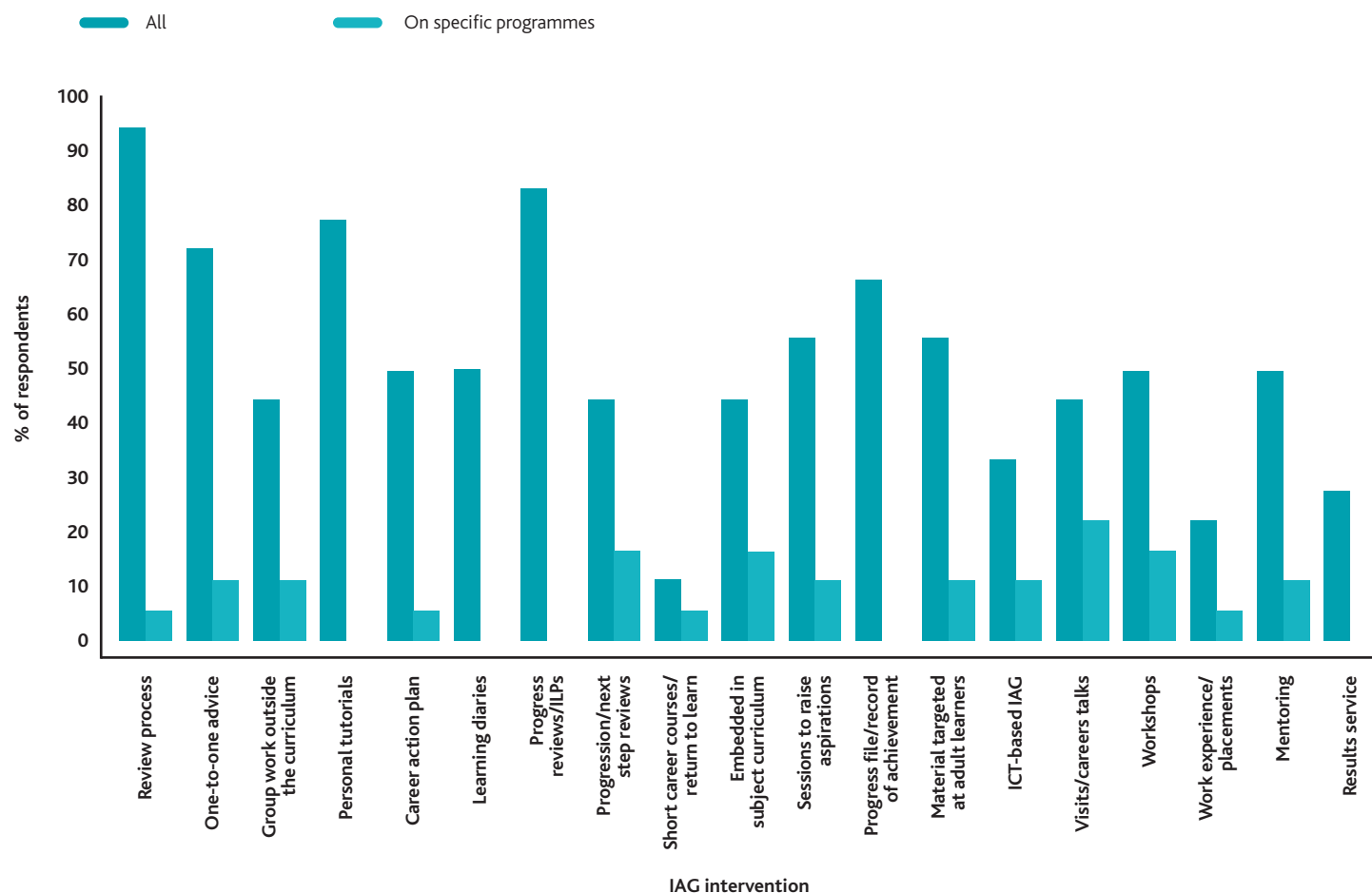


Figure 4c. Categories of learners to which different IAG interventions are offered in WBL (proportion of providers offering each intervention, by category of learner).



37
In these circumstances, adult learners will be more reliant on the central IAG services of their institution. Awareness and take-up of these services, together with tutor support to ensure that next steps are considered and additional sources of information and advice are accessed, are therefore crucial in ensuring successful progression. Evidence from the survey of providers (see Table 5 below) suggests that across all sectors, attention is paid to ensuring that learners have information about where and how to access IAG services. It is vital that this information is provided in a comprehensive and consistent way. There may be considerable scope too to extend the provision of IAG embedded within the subject curriculum. In only 16 per cent of cases in the survey was

this offered to all learners, whilst 17 per cent offered it to full-time learners only and 28 per cent to learners on specific programmes.

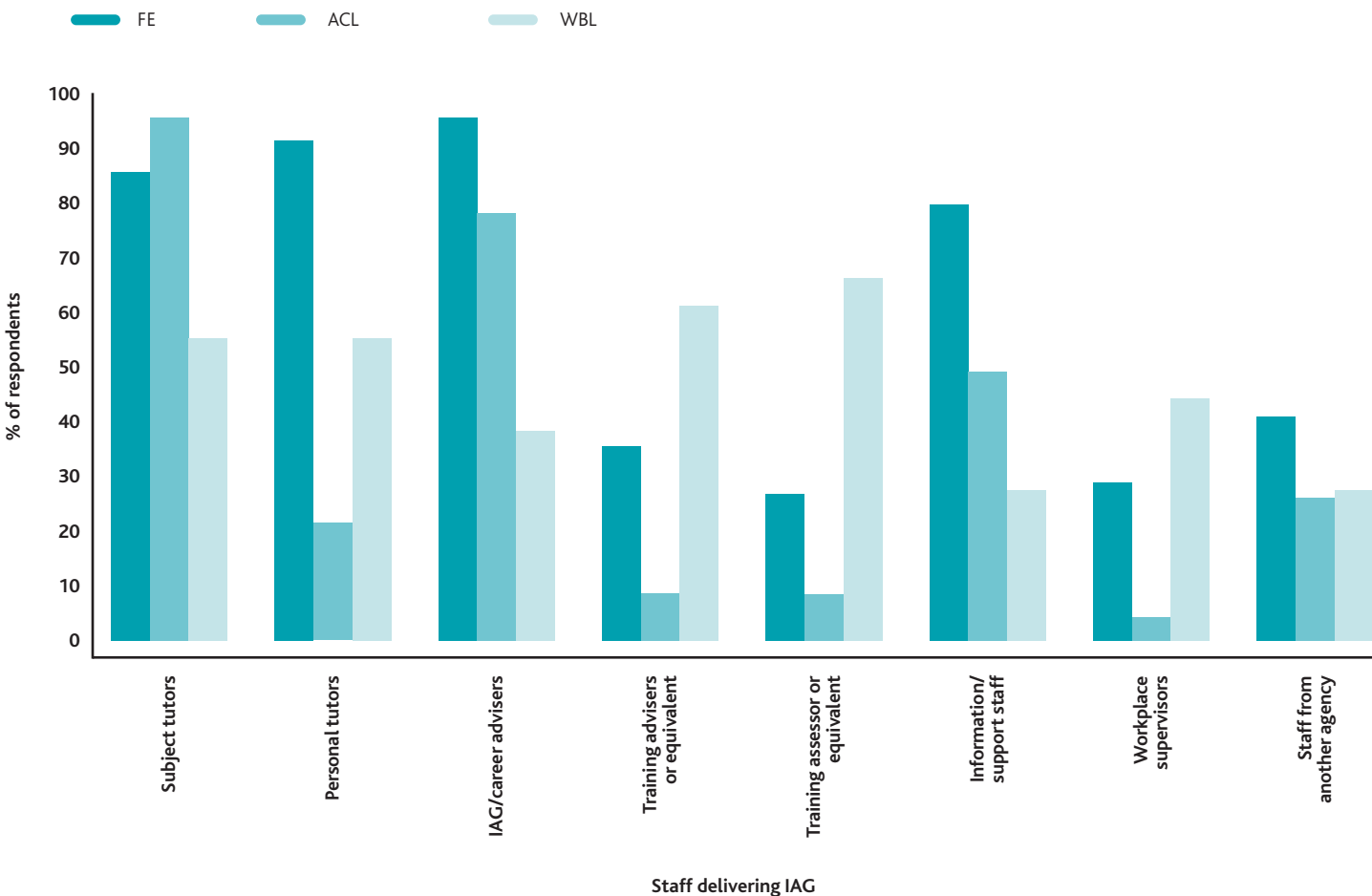
38
ILPs were identified by nearly 90 per cent of ACL respondents to the survey as a means by which IAG was offered to adult learners. However, in only 61 per cent of cases were these available to all learners, whilst in the remainder of cases they were confined to learners on specific programmes. Case Study 6 from New College Durham would however indicate that ILPs:

- could be used with adult learners on a wide range of provision, including, for example, those studying on termly programmes of two hours a week

- provide a focus for the consideration of next steps, as well as for tracking progress and recording achievement as identified through recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA).

39
Similar figures emerged for access to a review process to confirm that the learner was on the right course. One-to-one advice and guidance interviews, which were cited as a source of on-programme IAG provision by 81 per cent of respondents from ACL, were actually offered to all learners by 28 per cent of providers and were otherwise linked to attendance on specific programmes.

Figure 5: Data showing the proportion of FE, ACL and WBL providers in which different categories of staff deliver IAG.



Staffing

40

In their survey returns, respondents frequently cited the competence, experience, commitment and support offered by staff as a strength across all three sectors, particularly in FE and WBL. However, it is not clear whether these judgements related specifically to the specialist IAG staff within an organisation, to tutors, or to both. In WBL, it was also noted by other respondents that:

- IAG staff could become isolated
- more training in IAG was needed
- keeping staff up to date with labour market information needed improvement.

41

Several respondents in colleges commented that there were not enough staff to meet learner demand for IAG.

42

Figure 5 shows the percentage of organisations in each sector in the sample in which different categories of staff were involved in delivering IAG to adult learners.

43

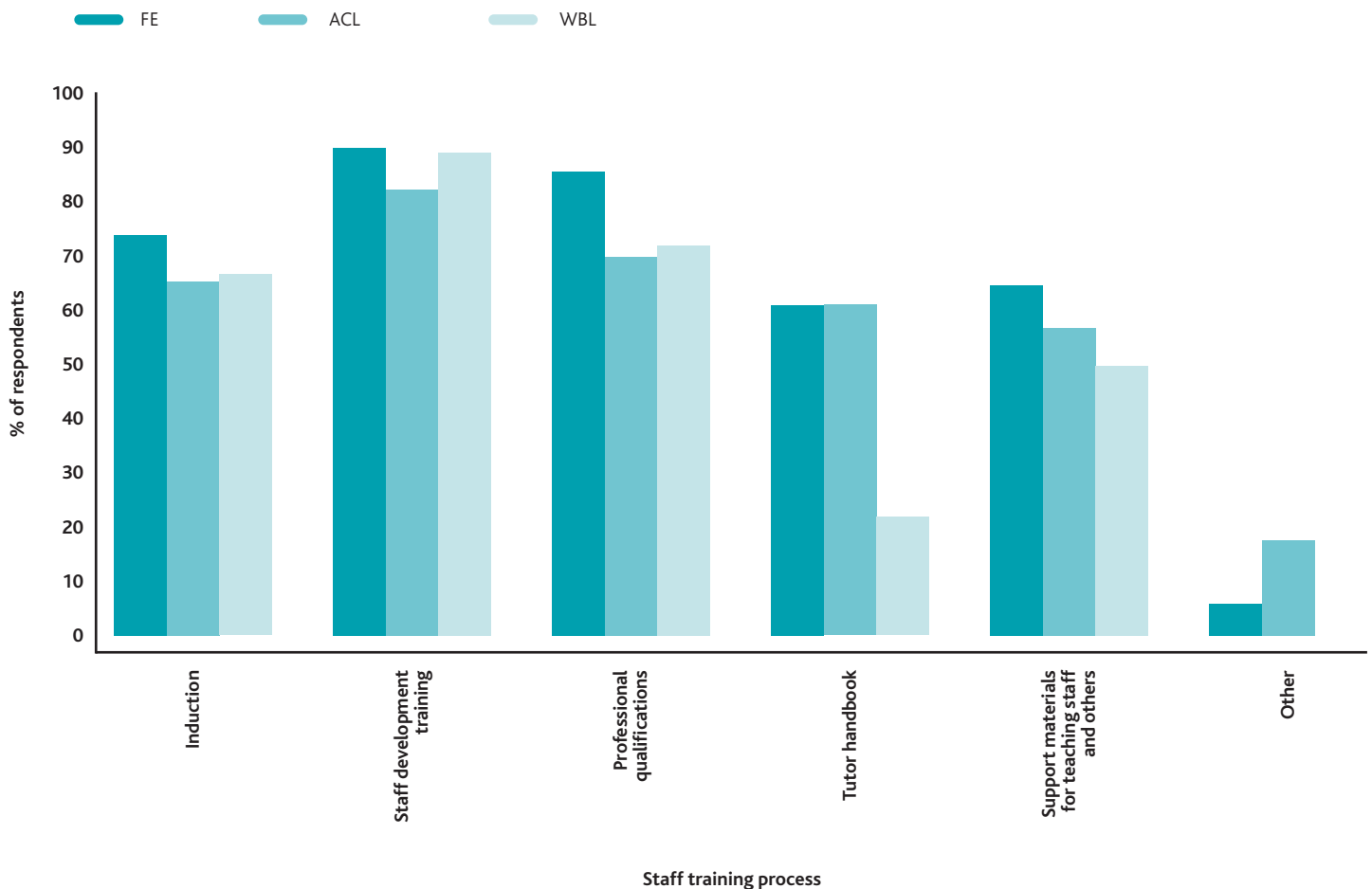
In the sample of FE providers, 96 per cent of organisations had specialist staff who delivered at least some of their IAG provision, 91 per cent used personal tutors to deliver at least some IAG, and 85 per cent used subject tutors. Information and support staff also played a significant role, delivering IAG in 80 per cent of responding

organisations. Within ACL, subject tutors were the staff most frequently cited as having responsibility for delivering IAG (96 per cent of cases), followed by specialist IAG staff (78 per cent). Training assessors and training advisers emerged from the sample of WBL providers as the two most important sources of IAG, being cited by around two-thirds of respondents.

44

The substantial contribution made by tutors to the delivery of IAG underlines the need for clarity in relation to their role and its boundaries, and highlights the importance of adequate training.

Figure 6: Proportion of providers in each sector using a range of approaches to train staff to deliver on-programme IAG to adult learners.



45 Respondents reported a range of approaches being used to ensure that staff delivering IAG to adult learners are competent to do so (summarised in Figure 6). Across the three sectors, the overall pattern that emerged is remarkably similar. Around 85 per cent of FE and WBL providers in the sample, and 70 per cent of those from ACL, employed staff holding professional guidance qualifications. It is not completely clear, but seems likely that these staff are to be found predominantly in central or student services. As far as non-specialist staff are concerned, the evidence suggests that many learning providers undertake a considerable degree of activity to support and equip them to deliver guidance. Staff development and training was used by nearly 90 per cent of all respondents, with 75 per cent of ACL and WBL providers making provision during staff induction, rising to 73 per cent in FE. Well over half of all respondents reported the availability of support materials for teaching and other staff, and almost two-thirds of FE and ACL providers included material on guidance in their tutor handbooks.

46 Such approaches as these are critical in view of the substantial role played by subject and personal tutors and other non-specialist staff in the delivery of IAG, and could and should be more widely adopted. In addition, evidence from the case studies (for example, Lewisham College and Lancashire Adult Learning Service) found exemplary practice where specialist IAG staff routinely support tutors in developing their knowledge and understanding of IAG, and ensure that they know when to refer to the IAG team for assistance.

47 There was some evidence from the case studies that having a high proportion of establishment staff (and fewer agency staff) can improve consistency in the IAG delivered on-programme as tutors become more expert in their roles and the range of skills and knowledge required.

Resources

48 Across each of the three sectors surveyed, evidence showed that adult IAG is funded from a range of sources. Table 3 indicates the relative importance of the principal different funding streams for the delivery of IAG in each sector.

49 This data suggests a number of areas of similarity exists across the sectors. Mainstream LSC funding emerged as the single most important source of support for on-programme adult IAG, being cited by around two-thirds of providers in FE, ACL and WBL. The European Social Fund (ESF) was listed by around 16 per cent of providers in each sector, raising questions about what the effect on provision will be once ESF funding is withdrawn. A significant minority of respondents in all sectors, but particularly in FE, reported that their organisation was drawing on its own resources to fund some adult IAG activity. A figure that stands out is the considerable degree of reliance apparent among ACL providers in the survey sample on nextstep funding to support their adult IAG work.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents indicating that adult IAG in their organisation was funded from a range of sources.

Funding source	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)
Mainstream LSC funding	69.6	65.2	61.1
Local authority	2.0	10.9	11.1
New Deal	8.1	2.2	16.7
Local initiative	4.7	8.7	5.6
Nextstep	42.6	60.9	16.7
Own resources	43.9	21.7	33.3
European Social Fund	16.2	15.2	16.7
Other	4.1	4.3	11.1

50

Case study evidence would indicate that:

- an understanding by senior management and funders of the ways in which IAG can contribute to strategic objectives and measures of success, such as widening participation, increasing retention and facilitating progression, is important in securing the resources required to deliver a good-quality service
- the skill of managers in accessing additional sources of funding, for example through partnership working with employers and using this creatively, can support development work to improve the quality of the IAG delivered.

Measuring the Impact

51

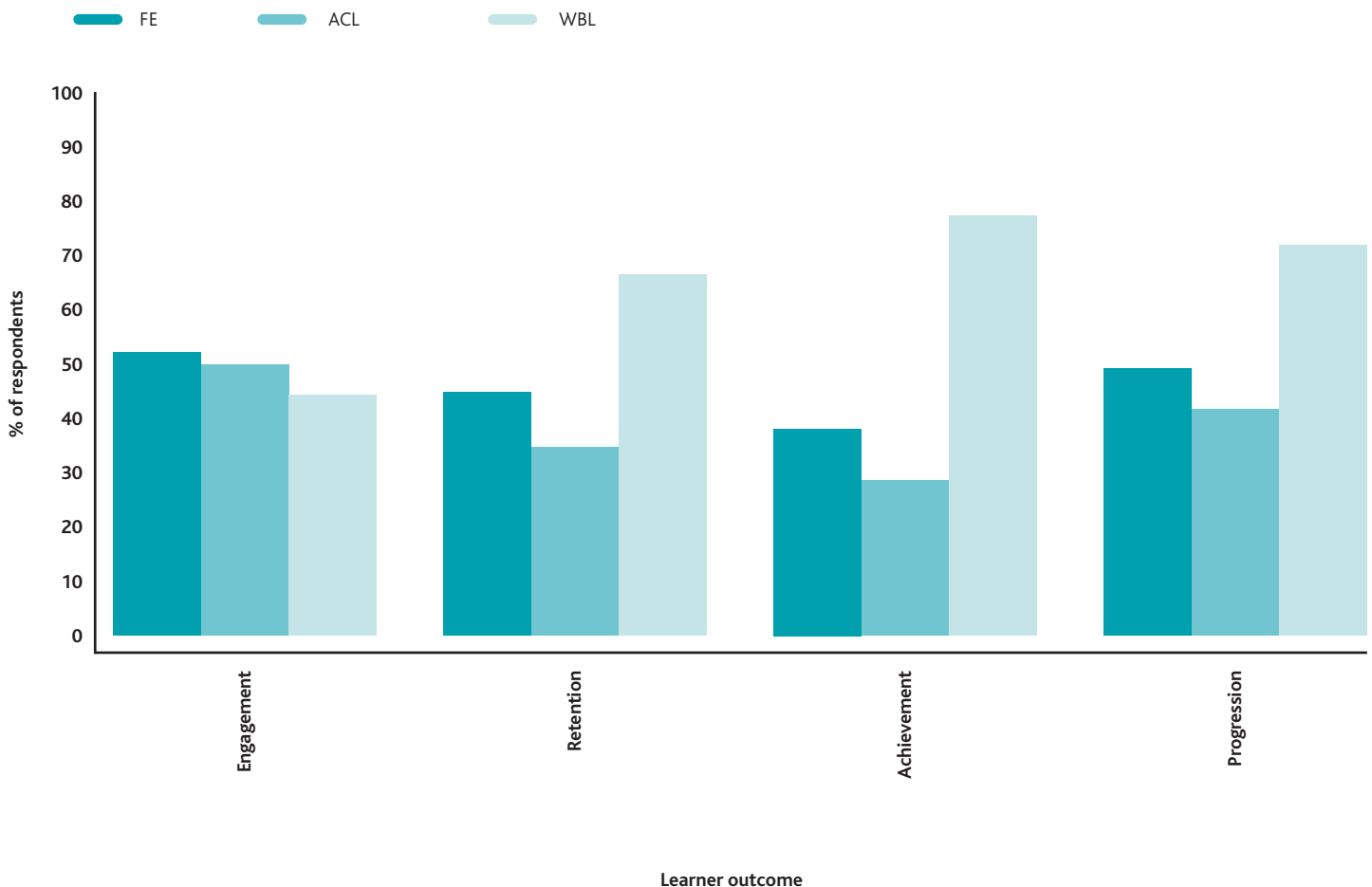
Survey respondents were asked whether their organisation took steps to measure the impact of IAG on the engagement, retention, achievement and progression of adult learners. The results are set out in Figure 7.

52

Overall, the evidence suggests that the impact of IAG on learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression is not widely measured by providers. The impact on engagement was measured by roughly half the responding organisations

in each sector, with only around 40 per cent of those in FE and ACL measuring retention, achievement and progression. Measurement of the latter outcomes among respondents from WBL was considerably higher at around 70 per cent, although we need to bear in mind the fragility of this data.

Figure 7: Proportion of providers measuring engagement, retention, achievement and progression in each sector.



53

Where respondents did indicate that the impact of IAG on learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression was measured, they were also asked to state what sources of evidence was used. These findings are set out in Annex A. It is apparent from this data that there are no sources that are routinely used, although four main ones did emerge:

- statistical data
- learner tracking
- learner feedback
- self-assessment reports.

54

It should be stressed that these were cited by only around a quarter to a third of FE and ACL respondents. Destination data was also used by just over a third of FE providers to measure the impact of IAG on progression. One particularly conspicuous gap in the responses from FE was any suggestion that employer feedback was routinely being sought on the impact of IAG on learner outcomes.

55

These findings strongly suggest that work currently being undertaken by providers to measure the impact of IAG remains undeveloped, and indeed several respondents to the survey indicated that this was an area in need of improvement, as these comments illustrate:

measurement of impact

tracking and monitoring impact of IAG

56

Evidence from the case studies indicates that staff may be sceptical about the extent to which it is possible to attribute learner success to an IAG intervention. For example, if a learner is retained on a programme, it does not necessarily reflect the quality of the IAG intervention, (at least not until the learner has completed successfully).

We are talking about one intervention on a journey, we cannot isolate the impact.

Student services manager

57

Because insufficient attention is being paid to measuring and evidencing the impact of IAG, many providers are not able to use such information adequately to inform their future work. Table 4 indicates the extent to which respondents indicated that this was taking place.

58

Developing rigorous systems to triangulate impact data from a range of sources would enable the findings to be fed through into strategic planning, self-assessment and planning for quality improvements.

Progression

59

In current public policy terms, the importance of IAG lies in its role in enabling individuals to progress in learning and work. As was noted above, less than half the respondents to the survey appear to be offering a progression review or a review of next steps immediately prior to exit (40 per cent in FE, 43 per cent in ACL and 17 per cent in WBL). Nevertheless, evidence gathered elsewhere in the survey suggests that the majority of providers in the sample - although by no means all - are actively taking steps to support and plan for progression.

60

Respondents were asked to judge the degree of emphasis that their organisation placed on a range of aspects of IAG. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents stating that impact measurements for IAG were used for a range of purposes.

Purpose	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)
Strategic planning	48.6	41.3	50.0
Operational planning	62.2	45.7	55.6
Planning quality improvements	63.5	52.2	77.8
Staff development	48.0	37.0	61.1
Self-assessment for inspection or quality awards	63.5	52.2	66.7

Table 5: Extent of emphasis placed on different types of on-programme IAG for adults.

Type of on-programme IAG	Extent of emphasis	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)
Making adult learners aware of how and where to access IAG services	None	-	2.2	5.6
	A little	0.7	6.5	5.6
	Some	31.1	32.6	38.9
	A lot	67.6	58.7	44.4
Helping adult learners develop strategies for making decisions about learning and work	None	-	6.5	11.1
	A little	10.1	19.6	11.1
	Some	50.1	36.9	44.4
	A lot	37.2	30.4	27.8
Helping adult learners develop strategies for implementing decisions about learning and work	None	0.7	4.3	5.6
	A little	8.8	28.3	27.8
	Some	53.4	23.9	38.9
	A lot	34.5	32.6	22.2
Helping adult learners to make decisions on next steps or progression in learning	None	-	8.7	-
	A little	2.0	4.3	16.7
	Some	44.6	50.0	44.4
	A lot	50.0	37.0	33.3
Helping adult learners to apply for further learning programmes	None	-	6.5	-
	A little	1.4	17.4	22.2
	Some	31.8	41.3	44.4
	A lot	64.9	30.4	27.8
Helping adult learners become aware of the range of possible career options	None	-	6.5	11.1
	A little	6.1	28.3	16.7
	Some	37.2	37.0	16.7
	A lot	53.4	28.3	50.0
Helping adult learners to research job opportunities	None	2.0	23.9	22.2
	A little	14.9	32.6	16.7
	Some	45.9	26.1	5.6
	A lot	33.8	15.2	50.0
Helping adult learners to apply for jobs or prepare for job interviews	None	0.7	21.7	27.8
	A little	20.3	45.7	16.7
	Some	41.2	13.0	5.6
	A lot	32.4	17.4	44.4

61 Although this exercise was not an exact science, it does give some indication of the degree to which providers in the sample delivered IAG with a focus on progression for further learning and employment. Equipping learners with skills for learning and career management should be a critical dimension of IAG.

62 This focus appears to have been greatest in FE. Nearly 90 per cent of FE respondents reported that their IAG provision placed some or a lot of emphasis on supporting learners to make and act upon decisions relating to learning and work, whilst almost all stated that the organisation sought to help learners to plan and progress in learning. There was also substantial, if rather less, focus on progression into work, with 90 per cent stating that their IAG aimed to help learners research possible career options. In around three-quarters of cases, this was backed by practical help with searching and applying for jobs.

63 The picture to emerge from ACL respondents was somewhat different, with 87 per cent stating that their adult IAG placed at least some emphasis on helping learners to make decisions about further learning, and just over 70 per cent on helping learners apply for programmes. However, the focus on IAG to support progression into employment was much less pronounced, with 41 per cent reporting that IAG in their organisation placed at least some emphasis on helping adults to research job opportunities, falling to 30 per cent for helping with job applications and interviews. Nearly a quarter of respondents stated that no emphasis at all was placed on these areas. Of course, this relatively low level of focus on preparing ACL learners for work is in part at least a reflection of both the nature of the learning programmes offered and the learners, including many older people, who access them.

64 Where specialist IAG workers are employed in ACL, they can be a very valuable resource in supporting progression, as illustrated by Case Study 1 from Lancashire Adult Learning. However, where there are no specialists in post, tutors can still intervene to encourage further learning. The nature of the intervention needs to be appropriate to the group. Where the IAG offered by provider organisations does not have the particular focus required to meet the needs of individual learners, the capacity to refer them on to other sources of IAG is crucial, and appropriate training needs to be given to the range of staff likely to need to signpost or refer to services such as nextstep or learndirect.

65 Providers also need to plan actively to support learner progression. The survey recorded 60 per cent of FE, 78 per cent of ACL, and 50 per cent of WBL providers reporting that they worked with other providers to plan progression and pathways. Several ACL providers identified work on progression as one of the strengths of their provision:

Progression routes [are] documented for all our provision.

Table 6: Respondents using a range of approaches to assure and improve the quality of on-programme IAG for adults.

Approach	Assure			Improve		
	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)	FE (%)	ACL (%)	WBL (%)
Matrix standard assessment and accreditation	68.9	69.6	33.3	56.1	43.5	27.8
Quality standards or systems	62.2	41.3	55.6	46.6	39.1	44.4
Monitoring and appraisal of staff performance	73.0	45.7	66.7	67.6	45.6	50.0
Observation	56.8	50.0	33.3	50.0	52.2	33.3
Self-assessment	70.9	47.8	66.7	61.5	54.3	44.4
Learner feedback	70.9	65.2	55.6	66.2	69.6	66.7
Staff development to meet identified needs	55.4	47.8	50.0	55.4	58.7	44.4
Other	13.5	15.2	-	2.0	8.7	-

[There is] recognition of progression routes from first steps non-accredited to qualified learner.

Family learning staff are all committed to progression ethos.

66

An important element of the provision used to widen participation and aid progression have been those courses and workshops, traditionally offered by ACL, with a return to learn theme, as illustrated in Case Study 7 from Somerset Learning and Leisure, from Making Your Experience Count to family learning provision. Effective IAG embedded in this provision plays an important role in raising confidence and aspirations and enabling learners to move on.

67

However, only around 50 per cent of providers stated that they made these pathways clear to learners through course information, suggesting that there is a need for many providers to review the course information that they provide. Rather more respondents were seeking to identify gaps in provision that might hamper progression, and using this information to inform future planning (nearly two-thirds in FE, over three-quarters in ACL and around 80 per cent in WBL).

Quality Assurance and Improvement

68

Respondents to the survey were asked about the ways in which their organisation sought to assure and improve the quality of on-programme IAG for adults. Table 6 summarises the results.

69

These figures suggest that there is a greater focus on quality assurance than on improvement, and that the broadest range of approaches to quality assurance is found in FE. In both FE and ACL, the matrix standard was cited as a quality assurance tool by around 70 per cent of respondents, whilst over 70 per cent of those in FE also cited staff monitoring and appraisal, self-assessment and learner feedback. Learner feedback was the most widely reported mechanism for informing quality improvement in IAG provision across all three sectors, being cited by around two-thirds of respondents. This finding is positive as it suggests that providers are acting on feedback from learners. Overall, however, the data indicates that in many organisations, quality assurance and improvement mechanisms may be inadequate, and too few providers are drawing on a range of sources of evidence to inform quality assurance and improvement.

Benefits of High-quality Information, Advice and Guidance

Matrix quality standard

70

In the sample, 92 per cent of FE colleges were accredited to the matrix quality standard (matrix). In 71 per cent of cases, this was only for student or central services. For ACL, 61 per cent were matrix accredited, a quarter of which had accreditation for central services only. Just 17 per cent of WBL providers were matrix accredited.

71

Respondents were also asked to state whether they perceived any benefits for their organisation from matrix accreditation. The survey showed that 71 per cent of FE providers, two-thirds of ACL providers and 40 per cent of WBL providers did so. Those who had indicated that they were willing to take part in further research were contacted, and 11 of these (mainly FE colleges) provided additional information. On case study visits, providers were also asked to comment on the business benefits for their organisation of attaining matrix. Fuller evidence was obtained during the case study visits, which allowed more time for reflection and tended to yield responses that were both more detailed and more positive.

72

There are indications that the perception of the benefits accrued from, and impact of, matrix was lower among college staff who were Beacon providers, or who had good inspection grades for guidance and support. The majority of those questioned in follow-up work to the survey identified some soft outcomes and a few supplied data on success rates and learner enrolments, but could not attribute the impact matrix had on these because:

- IAG provision was not evaluated in a way that would enable the impact to be measured
- training programmes had changed to an extent that any comparison was meaningless.

I cannot therefore confirm that the matrix assessment had any direct benefit in terms of inspection grades, student enrolment and improved success rates. We do not evaluate in this way.

Service manager



Professional standing of advice and guidance staff within the college has been flagged up so that other staff use their expertise fully to support recruitment and enrolment.

College service manager

- The award has increased the quality in the service delivered, by encouraging staff to reflect critically on their practice, providing a structure to review the service, sharpen up on quality procedures and make specific changes.
- It had contributed towards a good inspection.
- There was a perception that more learners were enrolling on programmes, for example following improvements to marketing and frontline services, but also a recognition that they were not collecting evidence that could be used to attribute this directly to matrix.
- Matrix had contributed in increased resources and improved facilities.

Inspection

74

Evidence suggests that:

- working towards matrix had assisted in the preparation for inspection
- providers achieved improved grades having reviewed the IAG provision for matrix and introduced changes.

The college had a satisfactory Ofsted/ALI inspection in January 2005 and support for students was cited as a key strength. The college was able to provide the matrix accreditation and the documentation which led to accreditation as evidence.

Service manager

73

The following analysis is based on feedback from 17 FE providers, of which 2 have WBL provision, with identified benefits cited by 3 or more respondents. These were as follows.

- Having matrix accreditation was important in retaining and gaining new contracts.

External verifiers frequently check whether we hold the matrix quality standard as part of the assessment process and external funding bids and contracts more and more are requesting that the guidance provision is matrix accredited, as a tangible measure of the quality of the advice and guidance offered to learners.

Guidance service manager

- The profile and status of the IAG provision and staff providing it had been increased as a result of gaining the award, both within the institution, and among partner organisations and learners: a link from this to the winning of new contracts was made by a couple of respondents.

75

Case Study 3 from Bury College found that undertaking the process to achieve matrix was a significant factor in the preparation needed to move from the FEFC to the Ofsted inspection regime. In the Ofsted inspection, after the service achieved matrix, support for students was judged to be outstanding with no identifiable weaknesses.

76

Providers have used evidence collected for the matrix assessment for the Ofsted and ALI inspection, and for the following:

- Investors in People
- Chartermark
- Council of Learning Resources in Colleges award.

77

Mapping by the Guidance Council (and subsequently ENTO) of the national standards and matrix against other quality standards facilitated this process.

Enrolments

78

There is a strong perception among staff providing the case studies that changes to marketing processes, materials and frontline and admissions procedures introduced as a result of working towards matrix have resulted in increased enrolments, as the following examples demonstrate.

79

At **New College, Swindon**, a greater understanding has been gained of the services it offers through the frontline staff attending the regular in-house training workshops, developed because of matrix. This has enabled them to become more confident in their delivery of IAG to the college's customers. The individual personal development of staff has resulted in their gaining the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Customer Service and Administration.

80

Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure

found that a significant number of its target client group would not normally seek out an advice interview, and that an alternative form of publicity was required. As part of the preparation for the matrix assessment, the service introduced a new, client-centred booklet. It is available in accessible forms and used by support staff to explain the purpose of learning advice. The service is also developing a video using adults with learning disabilities, with whom staff work, to promote the benefits of a learning advice interview.

81

As part of preparing for matrix, **Care Training** surveyed organisations that were referring potential applicants to check on the adequacy and quality of their marketing materials, gaps in information, understanding about eligibility and so on. The feedback was very useful and led to significant improvements being made to the materials produced and increased the number of appropriate referrals.

82

The curriculum manager in student services at **Bury College** felt the culture change that matrix had generated, with the greater emphasis on meeting individual learner needs and customer care (for example on reception and information services), was having an impact on encouraging new entrants into the college. Improvements were made in managing New Deal enquiries, and the expansion of New Deal, accredited within matrix in 2005, has brought an additional £500,000 into the college.

83

Matrix helped the staff at **Care Training** to understand the importance of ensuring that the front-end and exit procedures and systems were effective. The increased number of partners, improved networking arrangements, better marketing materials and a more systematic approach to tracking clients post exit have all been significant in increasing the number of appropriate referrals. More agencies and their staff are making referrals than ever before. The conversion rate between applicants interviewed and enrolments onto the company's programmes has increased from 60 per cent to 90 per cent, which may also be attributable in part to an enhanced initial guidance process.

84

The IAG service at **Lancashire Adult Learning** was developed at the same time as matrix was being introduced and the matrix elements were used to develop systems and procedures. Because changes in the course profile and curriculum offered coincided with the development of IAG provision, it is not possible to make any useful comparisons. However, there is a perception among senior management that the IAG service is contributing to increasing enrolments and more internal progression.

85

Matrix was considered to have an impact on adult recruitment at **South Thames College**. This has been enhanced by good internal progression routes, particularly important for this institution, which serves a very disadvantaged community and has a high proportion of Entry and Level 1 courses.

Success rates

86

Whilst respondents could not directly link matrix accreditation to improved success rates, in the case of New College, Swindon, where the award had been gained across the institution, there was a strong perception that matrix was significant in bringing about improvements for both adults and 16–19 learners. Meanwhile at MANCAT, the recent joint ALI and Ofsted annual inspection visit, undertaken since the college achieved matrix, reported that students were achieving better results than could be expected in view of their starting point on entry. Inspectors noted that action plans and case studies recorded by the Guidance Service with individual learners identify issues and their resolutions, giving qualitative evidence of successful interventions.

Business benefits

87

It can be argued that any assessment of the impact of matrix should include those costs to the provider that might have been incurred, had changes prompted by matrix not been introduced. The inclusion of the need to meet legislative requirements in the standards, such as the Data Protection Act (DPA) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), has encouraged providers to take action to ensure these are met. At Bury College, working towards the national standards and matrix accreditation included a review of the requirements under the DDA – for example the language needs of those with disabilities. As a result, a lot of training has been undertaken across the college. Increased understanding of the requirements of the legislation, among all staff, including those delivering frontline and reception services, should have reduced the likelihood of legal action against the college, and should make a positive contribution to the institution's risk assessment. Meanwhile, at New College, Swindon, matrix accreditation has ensured that marketing practices have become

more focused in producing publications. There are now extra quality checks built into all published materials with increased proof runs and materials are screened to ensure that they adhere to the principles of impartiality, equality and diversity and so on. Staff consider all areas of the college customer base especially in relation to equal opportunities.

88

There is also evidence of greater efficiency in working practices. At New College, Swindon, flowcharts have been used to build on systems and staffing already in place within the teams to ensure that they are using their resources appropriately.

Improving the quality of the learner's experience

89

Three aspects of the work towards gaining matrix accreditation highlighted by respondents were the requirements to:

- gain learner or user feedback
- network
- adopt a systematic approach to quality improvement.

90

As discussed in paragraph 69 above, there is evidence that the sector is collecting more detailed learner feedback on IAG provision and that this is being analysed to innovate and improve the provision. Findings from the case studies support this view. Training Care has designated a "quality week", which is dedicated to obtaining feedback from learners, funders (for example, Jobcentre Plus) and partner organisations, such as nextstep. Feedback from learners is obtained through quizzes focusing on the quality of the provision and the extent to

which it meets their needs, and their level of understanding of the programme from the induction process. At Lewisham College, the emphasis in the matrix standard on learner feedback on IAG and customer service encouraged staff to consider how client-focused the service was and what more they could do. Students requested more flexibility in the times guidance staff were available and the team has altered rotas to provide this short notice, drop-in facility.

91

Where networking links have been extended, this is resulting in more appropriate referrals. This may particularly impact on those WBL providers less used to a networking ethos.

Matrix has really helped in understanding the value of networking.

Sales and marketing manager

92

The development of the networking links required by matrix have brought about a number of benefits for Care Training and its learners, including improvements in referral both:

- at the point of entry if an applicant is not suitable for the industry or the provision is inappropriate; and
- at the point of exit if a client has not found work and needs further assistance from job brokers and the like.

93

For example, links have been extended into the nextstep partnership BEGIN (Basic Skills). Care Training does not deliver ESOL training, and in the past staff have found it difficult to support clients with these needs. The improved links have resulted in referrals to ESOL specialists, so improving the services to learners.

94

Changes to initial interview practice prompted by matrix will also be increasing the likelihood that learners are correctly placed, thus reducing wastage in public and private funds and the learner's time.

Other issues

95

Two issues of concern to respondents were raised during the study. These were:

- duplication of having both matrix assessment and ALL inspection
- cost of the matrix assessment in relation to the value of the contract (nextstep) for which it was required.

Section 3: Recommendations

Government Agencies

Learning and Skills Council

96

Consider whether appropriate incentives need to be put in place nationally to shift the focus of resources to achieve a more equitable balance of IAG across the learner pathway and to support progression.

97

Consider how providers can be supported to measure more effectively the impact of IAG on learner enrolments and success rates.

98

Ensure that relevant findings from this study inform the development and piloting of New Measures of Success, particularly:

- development of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) and the role of IAG to support progression within this
- staff development
- work on improving information on learner destinations.

99

Consider how the main findings and good practice from the study can be disseminated to support quality improvements in IAG embedded in learning and increase awareness of the business benefits and potential impact of achieving matrix accreditation for embedded IAG provision.

Sector Skills Development Agency

100

Consider how the relevant findings and good practice from the study can be disseminated to support sector skills councils in the development of their IAG provision and staff development activities.

Lifelong Learning UK

101

Ensure that the need for teachers, tutors and trainers to have an understanding of their role in the delivery of IAG is taken into account in developing the benchmark qualification Qualified Teacher, Tutor or Trainer in the Learning and Skills Sector (QTLS) to be attained by new staff as a licence to practise and any other awards.

102

Consider how continuing professional development (CPD) can be used better to equip teaching staff already in post to deliver IAG.

Inspectorates

103

Use the findings from this study to further inform how guidance and support, both formal and informal, are inspected.

104

Supplement the existing guidance given to providers with specific guidance on the inspection of embedded IAG.

ENTO

105

Map the links between the self-assessment process and matrix, and consider how evidence from matrix should be informing self-assessment.

106

Increase matrix penetration into WBL. For example, consider using matrix champions from WBL providers where business benefits have been identified.

Quality Improvement Agency and Learning and Skills Network

107

Ensure that research and development activities take account of the role of IAG in supporting progression for adult learners in order to demonstrate how IAG contributes towards addressing government priorities within the learning and skills sector.

Stakeholders

Information, advice and guidance strategic boards

108

Undertake a review of on-programme and progression IAG services and products delivered by members in their local areas to identify and address:

- gaps and how these could be filled
- ways in which good practice can be shared both within and between sectors
- where necessary, ways of broadening access to a wider range of products and services for adult learners in their area.

Association of Learning Providers, Association of Colleges and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

109

Disseminate the main findings and recommendations of this study to members and networks.

110

Encourage members to share good practice to improve the delivery of IAG to adults in their sector.

Providers

Priority areas

111

To increase consistency in the delivery of IAG embedded in learning and support progression, providers need to give particular attention to the following:

- a ensuring that the induction process and CPD for all staff involved in the delivery of IAG (and particularly teachers, tutors, trainers and assessors) addresses:
 - their responsibilities in relation to IAG and the principles underpinning this commensurate with their role
 - the need for regular updating of skills and knowledge, with particular reference to entry into the workplace and further learning
 - the local IAG provision to which they can refer learners
 - an awareness of the boundaries of their own skills and knowledge.
- b having appropriate IAG processes in place throughout the learning pathway, and in particular ensuring that all learners are invited to consider their next steps towards the end of their programme and are made aware of sources of further information.

Other Areas for Review and Improvement

All providers

Capacity

112

Providers should assure they have the capacity to ensure that:

- appropriate individual guidance is provided, particularly for vulnerable learners who may need additional support with progression

- sufficient IAG is delivered pre- and post exit to support progression, particularly where further learning or employment plans are not fulfilled.

Delivery

113

Providers should assure that:

- the skills and knowledge of specialist IAG staff are being sufficiently harnessed to support learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression
- their on-programme IAG services and products for adult learners are available and effective
- an appropriate balance of IAG to support decisions on both learning and work is available either embedded in programmes or through referral to internal or external specialists
- staff are aware of good practice in embedding work and learning readiness into learning programmes, and providers consider what steps could be taken to integrate readiness approaches into their own provision
- course information is tailored to the needs of adults and includes information on progression options.

Progression

114

Providers should assure that:

- tutors are aware of the main potential progression routes from their provision, taking into account lateral progression as well as vertical routes, and are using this to inform discussions with learners of the next steps and further learning and work opportunities
- new technologies are being used effectively to provide information on progression to adult learners, particularly where there is a clear progression pathway.

115

FE providers should pay particular attention to:

- assuring that adult learners on part-time programmes receive adequate and appropriate IAG to support progression
- assuring that subject and personal tutors are adequately trained and supported in the delivery of on-programme IAG.

116

ACL providers should pay particular attention to:

- helping adult learners to develop the skills to make and act upon decisions about learning and work
- assuring that, where appropriate, learners are adequately prepared and supported with progression into work
- assuring that subject tutors are adequately trained and supported in the delivery of on-programme IAG
- assuring that the range of approaches taken to delivering on-programme IAG is adequate to meet the diversity of learners' needs.

117

WBL providers should pay particular attention to:

- assuring that learners have access to the services of specialist IAG staff as necessary, through either the development of in-house expertise or referral on
- assuring that staff delivering embedded IAG are able to access adequate and appropriate support from specialist IAG staff, either internally or externally
- reviewing how their staff handbook could be better used to support staff delivering embedded IAG
- reviewing whether greater use could be made of ICT to deliver IAG to adult learners outside timetabled learning hours
- ensuring that learners are adequately and appropriately supported to plan for progression to further learning.

Annex A: Sources

1

Below are tables with the sources of evidence used by providers responding to the NIACE survey to measure the impact of on-programme IAG on the engagement, retention, achievement and progression of adult learners.



Table A1: Engagement.

Evidence source	Number			%		
	FE	ACL	WBL	FE	ACL	WBL
Statistical data	52	15	6	35.1	32.6	33.3
Learner tracking	31	11	3	20.9	23.9	16.7
Learner feedback	60	16	5	40.5	34.8	27.8
Employer feedback	11	3	5	7.4	6.5	27.8
Analysis of IAG records	43	15	5	29.1	32.6	27.8
Analysis of action or learning plans	13	9	3	8.8	19.6	16.7
Destination data or reports	22	1	2	14.9	2.2	11.1
Case studies	17	10	3	11.5	21.7	16.7
Self-assessment reports	33	9	4	22.3	19.6	22.2
Other	3	4	0	2.1	8.7	-
Don't know	0	1	0	-	2.2	-

Table A2: Retention.

Evidence source	Number			%		
	FE	ACL	WBL	FE	ACL	WBL
Statistical data	52	13	10	35.1	28.3	55.6
Learner tracking	39	12	8	26.4	26.1	44.4
Learner feedback	43	10	7	29.1	21.7	38.9
Employer feedback	12	1	4	8.1	2.2	22.2
Analysis of IAG records	30	10	4	20.3	21.7	22.2
Analysis of action or learning plans	18	5	5	12.2	10.9	27.8
Destination data or reports	21	1	1	14.2	2.2	5.6
Case studies	13	8	3	8.8	17.4	16.7
Self-assessment reports	33	8	7	22.3	17.4	38.9
Other	1	3	1	0.7	6.5	5.6
Don't know	0	1	0	-	2.2	-

Table A3: Achievement.

Evidence source	Number			%		
	FE	ACL	WBL	FE	ACL	WBL
Statistical data	49	8	10	33.1	17.4	55.6
Learner tracking	36	10	10	24.3	21.7	55.6
Learner feedback	34	11	9	23.0	23.9	50.0
Employer feedback	9	2	4	6.1	4.8	22.2
Analysis of IAG records	18	7	4	12.2	15.2	22.2
Analysis of action or learning plans	15	5	5	10.1	10.9	27.8
Destination data or reports	21	2	3	14.2	4.8	16.7
Case studies	8	7	5	5.4	15.2	27.8
Self-assessment reports	30	7	8	20.3	15.2	44.4
Other	0	3	1	-	7.0	5.6
Don't know	0	1	0	-	2.2	-

Table A4: Progression.

Evidence source	Number			%		
	FE	ACL	WBL	FE	ACL	WBL
Statistical data	49	11	10	33.1	23.9	33.3
Learner tracking	38	13	10	25.7	28.3	50.0
Learner feedback	45	15	9	30.4	32.6	61.1
Employer feedback	15	4	4	10.1	8.7	38.9
Analysis of IAG records	34	14	4	23.0	30.4	22.2
Analysis of action or learning plans	16	7	5	10.9	15.2	27.8
Destination data or reports	53	5	3	35.8	10.9	11.1
Case studies	14	11	5	9.5	23.9	22.2
Self-assessment reports	31	10	8	20.9	21.7	44.4
Other	0	6	1	-	13	5.6
Don't know	0	2	0	-	4.3	-

Annex B: Methodology

Survey of Providers

1 A survey questionnaire was developed and piloted at the start of September 2005 with one provider from each sector. At the first steering group meeting, agreement was reached on the final draft of the questionnaire and the most effective methods of distribution were discussed. It was agreed that NIACE would undertake a blanket postal distribution of the questionnaire to FE and ACL providers. The difficulty of reaching WBL providers was acknowledged. An alternative approach was accordingly suggested, with the Association of Learning Providers (ALP) agreeing to disseminate the questionnaire to the over 300 delegates attending its autumn programme of events on IAG. The aim was to obtain returns from a 25 per cent sample of providers in FE and ACL. Again, it was recognised that it would be more difficult to secure an equivalent sample from WBL providers.

2 In order to try and secure as wide a response as possible, a number of measures was taken to encourage providers to complete the questionnaire. Details of the project were posted on the National Association of Managers of Student Services (NAMSS) and National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA) websites. Two staged reminders were circulated by email to members of the Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFEFA) and a reminder notice was placed on the Association of Colleges (AoC) website. A further reminder notice, together with a

Table B1: Breakdown of survey responses by sector.

Sector	Responses (number)
FE	148
ACL	46
WBL	18

link to a downloadable version of the questionnaire, was published in Countdown, the e-newsletter of the ALP.

3 A total of 212 completed surveys was returned, divided among the three sectors as shown in Table B1.

4 There were variations in size among the organisations in the sample, although as Table B2 shows, by far the greatest number of responses from both FE and ACL came from providers delivering a large volume of provision.

5 Responding organisations provided a broad range of programmes and courses for adult learners. As Table B3 indicates, areas of particular focus included vocational and academic programmes, Skills for Life, independent living skills, higher education and community learning.

6 Overall, responses to the survey and requests for assistance with further research were sufficient in FE and ACL sectors. However, this was not the case in WBL, and so at this stage the findings relating to WBL should be considered as indicative.

7 Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for recording and initial analysis of survey data.

Case Studies

8 Providers responding to the survey were asked whether they would like to be considered to act as a case study. Eight were subsequently selected, four from FE and two each from ACL and WBL. Those that were chosen promised to enable the development of good practice examples of on-programme delivery and to show how this is supporting learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression. In making the selection, we also aimed to reflect a geographical spread, including urban and rural provision.

Table B2: Breakdown of survey responses by size of institution.

Number of learners	FE	ACL	WBL
Under 500	6	1	11
500-2,000	6	5	2
Over 2,000	128	38	4

Table B3: Breakdown of survey responses by type of provision.

Type of provision	FE	ACL	WBL
Vocational programmes (multiple areas)	135	15	9
Vocational programmes (3 or fewer sectors)	16	8	7
AS/A-level/GCSE	128	15	0
Skills for Life	135	39	8
New Deal	40	2	6
Other Jobcentre Plus funded programmes	30	3	7
First steps	39	39	0
Personal and community development	82	41	4
Independent living skills	112	27	2
Family learning	60	44	1
Higher education	135	3	1
Other	-	3	-

9

At the request of steering group members, the following issues were also explored, where possible:

- how providers were ensuring consistency and impartiality
- how IAG was contributing to equality and diversity
- the views of learners.

Annex C: Bibliography

ALI (2002) *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector 2001-02*, Coventry: Adult Learning Inspectorate

Blazey, D (2004) *Effects and Effectiveness of Widening Participation in Learning in County Durham*, Durham: County Durham Lifelong Learning Partnership

Champney, J, Davey, M and Lawrence, S (2005) *Breaking Down the Barriers: Success in widening participation: a toolkit approach*, London: LSDA

DfES (2003) *Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults: National Policy Framework and Action Plan*, Sheffield: DfES at www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/iag/front.htm

Limb, A (1992) Strategic planning: managing colleges for the next century. In N. Bennett *et al*, *Managing Change in Education*, London: Open University Press, pp. 166–78

LSC (2005) *Statistical First Release ILR/SFR08*, Coventry: LSC

Martinez, P (1997) *Improving student retention: A guide to successful strategies*, London: FEDA

Martinez, P (2000) *Raising achievement: A guide to successful strategies*, London: FEDA

Maynard, J and Smith, V (2004) *Practical Ways of Improving Success in Modern Apprenticeships*, London: LSDA

Merton, A (2001) *Review of Adult Learning Plans*, Leicester: NIACE

Nashashibi, P (2002) *Learning in progress: Recognising achievement in adult learning*, London: LSDA and NIACE

NIACE (2005) *Eight in Ten: Adult learners in further education: Report of the independent committee of enquiry invited by NIACE to review the state of adult learning in further education in England*, Leicester: NIACE at www.niace.org.uk/Publications/E/eightintenn.asp

Ratcliffe, M, Atkinson, J, Burgess, C and Carter, N (2001) *Developing Good Practice in New Deal*, London: LSDA and LSC

Sadler, J (2002) *Making the Best Match: Improving the quality of pre-course advice and guidance*, London: LSDA

Sadler, J and Reisenberger, A (1997) *On Course for Next Steps: Careers education and guidance for students in FE*, London: FEDA

Sadler, J and Smith, V (2004) *Boosting your Retention Rates: Lessons for preventing early drop-out*, London: LSDA

Smith, V and Armstrong, A (2005) *Beyond Prejudice: Inclusive learning in practice*, London: LSDA

Smith, V and Hughes, H (2003) *Making the Difference: Provider support for learner retention and achievement in work-based learning*, London: LSDA



Annex D: Case Studies

Case Study 1

Lancashire Adult Learning: Using Information, Advice and Guidance Officers to Reach New Learners and Support Progression

Introduction

1

Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL), the adult and community learning service of the county council, is decentralised and divided into three zones (South, East and North). In 2003/04, there were over 43,000 learners enrolled on its programmes, with 30 per cent of the provision being delivered through external sub-contractors, mostly FE colleges. Learning is provided through libraries, other county council departments and in over 600 community venues. Much of the provision offered by LAL is non-accredited, and therefore the measure of achievement is successful completion. It includes:

- a community development programme
- targeted provision for disadvantaged groups
- Skills for Life
- provision from learndirect
- an advertised programme of short courses and short residential courses.

2

In Lancashire, 5.3 per cent of the population is from diverse minority ethnic community groups and in some areas there is also a relatively high proportion of elderly residents (21 per cent across the county are over 60). There are pockets of huge deprivation in certain areas, and those wards in the top 10 per cent in the Index of Multiple Deprivation are prioritised by the service.

3

Approximately three-quarters of the activity of the service is resourced by the LSC, and a quarter through other sources of funding including ESF projects such as community capacity funding.

4

The service works to a development plan and an annual operational plan. LAL's strong commitment to widening participation and progressing learners is reflected in the first of its key service objectives for 2005/06, which is:

Widening participation in learning among under-represented groups through a range of first steps and related provision, which specifically encourages and enables progression to Level 2 and by maintaining a broad and responsive curriculum.

5

Consistency in delivery across the service is promoted through:

- a number of service-wide groups focusing on areas such as equality and diversity, widening participation and quality improvement, which ensure that good practice is shared
- common policies, including one relating to IAG, which specifies how IAG should be delivered and the principles underpinning this, and includes statements that:

All staff are aware of IAG and how it can be accessed.

IAG is available throughout all stages of adults' learning.

6

Each zone or college is expected to document procedures for the delivery of IAG.

7

The county council's library service is a key part of the IAG provision, signposting and referring potential learners, and each zone has a library liaison group bringing together key staff from both services to review and improve the IAG service. In each zone, there is a strategic manager with responsibility for IAG and there is also a service strategic manager.

Information, advice and guidance provision

8

The service's specialist IAG provision was established in 2002 with a Local Initiative Fund (LIF) grant for the first two years. It resulted from the desire to provide an impartial service to the adult community, particularly to:

- engage with "hard-to-reach" groups as part of the strategy to widen participation
- introduce new learners into the service
- assist them to progress onto other providers.

9

As noted in the 2005–08 development plan:

In particular, IAG will be an inherent component of all Skills for Life, wider family learning and family language, literacy and numeracy and first steps provision.

10

LAL has delivered extensive training for its staff on equality and diversity issues and has built strong links in the community. The specialist IAG provision, being targeted at more disadvantaged and vulnerable adults, builds partnerships with agencies that work with them (for example, Sure Start and the Shaw Trust). It is seen as making a significant contribution to the equality and diversity agenda. Lancashire Adult Learning was inspected in November 2004, and achieved a grade 1 for equality and diversity.

11

The outreach provision is managed for the service by a team of learning organisers, who engage in dialogue with their local community groups to establish the needs of their volunteers and customers and develop customised learning programmes. The IAG officers work alongside the learning organiser team in developing community projects and attending promotional events, encouraging adults into learning. For example, in the last academic year, East zone ran a service-wide project, targeted at members of minority ethnic groups interested in becoming tutors.

12

The discreet IAG service is mainly funded through the core grant with a small contribution from nextstep for work with adults below Level 2. The service also has a contract with the local Jobcentre Plus. It is composed of:

- South zone: one full-time equivalent (FTE) post (two staff)
- East zone: one FTE post (two staff)
- North zone: one FTE post (two staff).

Matrix accreditation

13

The specialist IAG service was being developed as the matrix quality standard (matrix) was being introduced nationally. Robust systems were already in place across LAL, but the IAG officers were able to design their own specific systems and procedures within this framework, to meet matrix requirements. So for example the statement of service was produced by the IAG staff in South and East zones.

14

In 2004, matrix accreditation was achieved by LAL across the whole service, with each zone gaining its own award.

Tutor induction and training in information, advice and guidance

15

All learners are given either a copy of the learner handbook or a summary sheet. Tutors are initially introduced to the LAL learner handbook and entitlement at their induction to the service and are taken through these. The handbook includes:

- information about the IAG service, which specifies that the service is impartial and lists the services on offer
- a tutorial framework in South zone, which specifies that 15 minutes of tutorial time is included in each class and lists what this is expected to cover. Towards the end of the programme, tutors are expected to "provide information and advice on progression routes available".

16

Discussions at this point in the induction include principles underpinning delivery such as confidentiality and impartiality. New tutors also cover:

- how IAG is delivered more broadly in the service and their contribution to this
- the role of the IAG specialists.

17

Tutors have a CPD folder containing handouts from their induction for reference. A common process and documentation assist in ensuring consistency in tutor delivery throughout the service.

18

IAG staff are also involved in termly updating and networking meetings for tutors, at which they reinforce the messages from the induction and increase tutors' understanding of the ways in which they can assist. Progression and how tutors can support this is addressed and the IAG officers assist by using scenarios to explore issues raised in delivering IAG. There are also guidelines to enable tutors to identify when they should refer to the IAG team for assistance, and a staff newsletter offers the opportunity to update staff on relevant issues. IAG officers subsequently follow up new staff on an individual basis as appropriate.

Evaluation and development of information, advice and guidance provision

19

The following data is collected to evaluate the IAG provision:

- user profile – ethnicity, educational level, employment status, gender
- class visits by IAG officers: how useful these were and the numbers needing to be followed up
- numbers of information episodes, and advice and guidance sessions.

20

In 2004/05, 71 per cent of those accessing advice and guidance were at Level 2 or below.

21

Nextstep clients are followed up after one month and six months and outcomes are analysed. Positive and negative comments are collected and forwarded, with the statistical data to the senior manager responsible for IAG, who feeds anything relevant to the zone's senior management team (SMT) or cross-county quality groups, following an agreed procedure. Similarly, all learner feedback is analysed and sent to the zone curriculum leader. Qualitative comments are forwarded to all members of the zone's SMT and relevant comments fed back to tutors and the IAG team.

22

Qualitative comments from the learner are also included in the self-assessment report. Any necessary action is agreed and added into relevant plans. This might, for example, include a change to staff development provided.

23

Observation of one-to-one interviews is undertaken. Across the service there is a standard observation of teaching and learning procedure that covers all aspects of this (including IAG, tutorial, any equality and diversity or support issues) through the application of the Common Inspection Framework.

On-programme information, advice and guidance to support learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression

24

The tutor is seen as the main contact for learners on-programme and seeking to progress, and may be the most knowledgeable about their own subject area. The nature of the intervention needs to be appropriate to the group, but reflect the tutorial framework.

25

For example, a tutor working on community development and running four-hour workshops will:

- give each participant a leaflet on further learning opportunities
- briefly bring further opportunities to the attention of the group
- where an interest in participating in further learning is identified, refer the learner to the IAG officer.

26

The service has produced a two-page information sheet for participants on short courses, which has nearly half a page on further information, advice and guidance. This specifies the impartiality of the help available, gives details of some further learning options, and specifies how additional IAG can be found, including individual help from an IAG officer.

27

The IAG provision for learndirect is more in-depth because of the nature of the learning and consists of:

- an initial 45-minute session at the beginning of the programme to ensure that learners have made the right choice, planning their learning, clarifying tutor support and introducing the individual learning plan, which is used to record the long-term goal
- a 15-minute IAG session as each part of the learning programme is completed to record progress and confirm next steps
- towards the end of the programme, the opportunity to meet one of the IAG officers to discuss progression opportunities and entry into work: many of those on learndirect programmes have been made redundant and are interested in work options.

28

There is a learndirect module called Getting a Job, which covers job opportunities, CV writing, preparing for interviews and jobsearch.

29

The Skills for Life provision includes in-depth initial diagnostic assessment and a check on reasons for improving basic skills. Learners at Entry Level 1 or Foundation Level work through the topics and levels and are assessed individually to ensure progress. They can be referred at any point to the IAG officers, but this is most likely to be once they have reached the point of taking the Level 2 tests, and are more employable. The IAG officers will also visit the programme (as specified below).

Retention and learner engagement

30

Retention rates are generally good, hovering around 90 per cent. There are a few programmes where the retention rates are poorer, sometimes due to the circumstances of the group. Sometimes those taking learndirect programmes can drift because the learning is more self-directed and therefore more dependent on the individual to motivate themselves. These learners are monitored closely and the co-ordinator will follow up as necessary. Tutors are also expected to contact learners who are absent. A learner who is not progressing or no longer attending classes can be referred to the IAG officers by the tutor.

Progression

31

IAG officers, tutors and learning organisers work together to ensure that learners are supported in taking their next steps. In South zone, the vast majority of those going on to FE will attend Skelmersdale College, Runshaw College or Preston College, and many also take up volunteering, sometimes as a route back into paid work.

32

Each curriculum area has a curriculum leader with whom the tutors work on developing the structure of the curriculum, which in turn increases their understanding of progression opportunities. Comprehensive progression pathways have been documented for ICT and languages. Progression opportunities are included on the staff section of the website. In 2004, it was noted in the inspection report that:

There is a good range of learning programmes and progression routes are good.

33

Where there is an obvious progression route, the learning organisers may visit the class towards the end of the programme to talk about their progression pathways. The IAG officers will support tutors by:

- visiting classes to provide IAG on next steps. There is an IAG slot built into a number of programmes, such as Skills for Life, family learning and community development provision, even where these are only two or three hours per week for a term or less. The input is customised for the group, but may fairly typically include a group discussion about opportunities for progression, an introduction to Adult Directions and an invitation for individual assistance as necessary
- providing tutors with information about the local job market and learning providers
- referring learners to other agencies

- arranging one-to-one advice sessions with individual learners to help them plan their progression. The IAG officers will help learners with job applications, CV preparation and interview techniques. A number of those on learndirect programmes are interested in completing CVs, and this can be integrated into their word-processing learning and supported by the IAG worker. Vulnerable learners interested in progressing to a programme offered elsewhere may also be introduced to the new centre and tutor and be guided through the enrolment process.

34

Progression data is gathered at the end of the programme, at which point learners are asked about the quality and outcomes of their learning programme. The learner feedback data from 2004/05 indicated that 97 per cent of learners considered they had been given enough useful information and guidance to help them decide how to take their learning further.

35

LAL is also involved in a progression project, in which each zone is identifying destinations for a particular group of learners. In North zone, it is carers, learners with mental ill health and homeless learners. In East zone, it is learners progressing from adult and community learning to further education, and in South zone, staff are going to report on the progression of offenders from Offender Learning and Skills Strategy community provision. One of the key actions in the development plan in relation to key partners is:

improving IAG and referral mechanisms from directly delivered ACL provision to FE provision, and in developing tracking mechanisms to register and demonstrate progression.

What works best

36

The IAG officers identified the following factors as important in helping to ensure that learners achieve and progress:

- the flexibility to tailor the service to the individual (this is commented on frequently by a large number of learners)
- achieving a balance between being supportive and available without developing dependency
- taking the service into the community and not expecting the learners to come to them, including holding surgeries in community locations and moving them to alternative locations when they are poorly attended
- reporting unmet needs to the learning organiser teams so that consideration can be given to meeting those needs (for example, staff are currently discussing the provision of general classes with childcare available as a result of comments made to the IAG officers).

37

The factors affecting the establishment and quality of IAG provision are:

- LAL senior management commitment to a small but discreet team of IAG officers, whose expertise can infuse the service, widen participation by reaching new learners and facilitate progression
- support of the local LSC managers, who viewed the service as important in supporting progression, hence the initial two-year funding to develop the provision
- establishment of a service-wide steering group to ensure consistency, exchange good practice and reduce duplication of effort.

The learner's voice

38

Two learners were interviewed.

39

Julie was taking a Computer for Life programme through learndirect and attending classes in numeracy and literacy, a package which was put together with the help of the IAG officer.

40

Peter had been suffering from mental illness following a heart attack, which led to the loss of his job, 12 months of unemployment and isolation, and depression. He was referred to the IAG officer by the Shaw Trust. She helped him to access the European Computer Driving Course through the learndirect centre, because, as he was experiencing panic attacks, he didn't feel able to participate in a class where he might be asked to contribute. Since this initial introduction to learning at the centre, he has started a yoga class and, having tried a taster, was intending to take a course in creative expression. The therapeutic effect of the learning was a factor in lowering the dose of the medication he was taking.

41

The aspects of the IAG provision that learners identified as most valuable were:

- sensitivity of the IAG officer to the difficulties that they were experiencing, and the flexibility to make changes to accommodate them
- one-to-one contact so that they felt that their individual needs had been appropriately diagnosed and met
- ongoing contacts and relationship with the IAG officer (and tutor) so they felt that any problems that arose could be addressed
- IAG officer's expertise about the range of the provision available, so that the learners were updated about other opportunities in which they might be interested

- ability to attend taster sessions before committing to a class. It may be particularly important for some less confident prospective learners to meet the tutor and the class and gain a feel for the group dynamics.

Benefits of matrix accreditation

42

Matrix offered a template for developing the specialist provision.

Inspection

43

Evidence to gain matrix was used in the 2004 inspection and in the renewal of the Investors in People (IiP) standard. The development of the IAG provision in line with the matrix standard offered evidence to the inspectorate of a high-quality service and indicated that the IAG being delivered was of a good standard. The work of the IAG officers in accessing hard-to-reach groups contributed to the grade 1 (outstanding) in equality and diversity in 2004. The quality of IAG was noted in the inspection report:

Information and guidance are good in community learning.

Programme managers, tutors, and information, advice and guidance advisers work well together to provide appropriate individual learner support. Learners receive very good information, advice and guidance on application, during and at the end of their programmes.

44

Under leadership and management, one of the strengths listed was:

particularly effective implementation of strategies to promote learning to under-represented groups.

Enrolments

45

Because the change in course profile and the curriculum offered coincided with the development of IAG provision, it is not possible to make any useful comparison in enrolment numbers. However, there is a perception among senior management that the IAG service is contributing to increasing enrolments and more internal progression.

Improved learner satisfaction

46

Changes have been made to the provision as a result of the IAG feedback gained.

Acknowledgements

47

Thanks are due to Ann Boocock, Assistant Principal, Lancashire College (South zone), Cathy Jones and Doreen Farmer, IAG Officers, Gill Irving and Ian Salt, Tutors, and learners from LAL.

Case Study 2

Bury College: New Deal Delivery Supported by Specialist College Services

48

Bury College is a tertiary college, based in Bury town centre, in four main buildings. Recently opened after a £21,500 building programme is the Beacon Centre, which incorporates a purpose-built performing arts and humanities facility and purpose-built facility to house the college's Early Years Child Care and Education Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE). Bury College also has two bridge centres nearby which offer primarily IT courses.

49

There are in excess of 14,000 students studying at Bury College, of which 3,400 are on full-time courses. The college has previously been awarded Chartermark, has liP status and is one of 17 Beacon award holders for learning and skills provision.

Introduction

50

Bury College has been running New Deal provision for the last six years. The programme is roll-on, roll-off and there are currently 125 adults on the programme, mostly on part-time, 16-hour programmes, and a couple on 30-hour programmes, with a substantial number of lone parents. Adults are referred from Jobcentre Plus, and the focus of the scheme is on increasing employability. Staff work to a target of 40 per cent entry into employment, and are achieving 80 per cent entry. As trainees start at the college, training needs are assessed on an individual basis. A programme is then tailor-made for each individual using the courses available at the college, and sometimes other provision.

Checking job-readiness

51

On entry into the programme, a job skills checklist is completed covering:

- the work or job experience the learner has
- their competence in jobsearch
- levels of confidence in applying for work.

52

On the basis of these, barriers to entry into work are identified and learners who need help with jobsearch are referred to the IAG team for individualised assistance, such as completing job applications or developing CVs. Each learner on New Deal has a weekly meeting with a member of the New Deal team, checking attendance and addressing any issues or concerns. The staff have an open door policy on the basis that they want learners to feel that they can access immediate help if problems arise. Tutors monitor progress on the programme itself and the New Deal team checks learner progress with them by email.

53

A review is undertaken by New Deal staff with all learners four to six weeks before the end of their programme to check on their next steps.

Accessing cross-college services

54

Learners on New Deal can take advantage of a range of workshops, information resources and other facilities on offer to learners at the college. Those on vocational programmes will benefit from undertaking work experience with the other students. Learners are offered a mock interview with the curriculum manager, student services. Skills audits are undertaken with New Deal students, who have an element of outcome-related funding built into the funding mechanism. This enables them to use the information to apply for jobs, complete their personal statements and so on.

55

The New Deal co-ordinator will refer learners or make the necessary arrangements. Some learners may be lacking in confidence and benefit from attending a workshop on assertiveness. In this way, it is possible to meet individual needs. By the time learners leave New Deal, they should be able to:

- use the Internet, newspapers and so on for jobsearch
- match their own skills to job vacancies
- have their own CV
- be able to present themselves at job interview
- benefit when competing in the labour market from an increase in their employability.

Factors that make the difference

56

Staff considered that the following factors were important to the success of the scheme:

- a holistic approach to the individual
- being available to learners during working hours on a one-to-one basis
- the focus on individual needs
- learners being able to access other services and facilities in the college.



Case Study 3

Bury College: Supporting the Delivery of On-programme Cross-college Information, Advice and Guidance with a Menu of Specialist Services

Introduction

57

For background on Bury College, see Case Study 2.

58

Specialist staff delivering information, advice and guidance are located in the student services department and include an IAG team and student learning mentors. The curriculum manager, student services is also actively involved in delivering IAG. In addition, the delivery of IAG at the college is supported by a strong team of personal advisers from Connexions, who provide a five-day service and are also linked into the curriculum areas. Three staff trained to deliver guidance are employed by the college. The student services department includes a range of other functions and the New Deal provision, where the co-ordinator works closely with the IAG team to increase participant employability and support adult entry into work.

59

The principles underpinning the delivery of the service are:

- best-fit guidance based on individual needs
- differentiation in delivery when individuals use the services to reflect individual needs
- interaction with the curriculum at student level.

60

The staff commitment to impartiality is included in the statement of service, which is displayed, and forms part of the professional code to which trained staff work. Any issues regarding impartiality would be addressed as part of the guidance observation process.

61

The effectiveness of IAG service delivery is evaluated through:

- levels of activity (including for the evening provision)
- client completion of post-interview feedback forms
- collation of data on user profile, levels of activity, sources of referral into the service (internal and external) and from the service
- client feedback on the appropriateness of the referral
- records of progression from guidance interviews
- analysis of conversion data from application interview to enrolment.

On-programme information, advice and guidance provision for learners

62

Tutors are supported in their delivery of IAG on-programme by a tutor handbook and guidelines that have a strong focus on the pastoral curriculum and cover requirements on work experience.

63

Once learners are on-programme, a "right course review" is carried out at the end of the induction. Learners on full-time programmes are entitled to five one-to-one reviews annually with their tutor, and some aspects of IAG will be delivered by tutors on programmes such as Access. More generally, the approach to the provision of IAG to support the recruitment, retention, achievement and progression of learners is through:

- tutor- or self-referral to use the facilities and services offered by student services (which includes some evening provision) on an individual basis (and which could for example include a mock interview). A referral process is in place for use by tutors
- group work or workshops provided by student services staff for particular programmes at the request of the tutor
- linking Connexions personal advisers and the IAG team to specific programmes where learners will need individual support to progress or IAG interventions may contribute to improved retention and achievement
- cross-college activities and schemes, particular elements of which focus on motivating and retaining learners, and career options or next steps.

64

Student services staff may work with a tutor to deliver a series of linked interventions, for example group work on preparing for job interviews, body language and so on, followed by individual mock interviews. Mock interviews are available to support entry into both further learning (particularly university) and work. Each interview takes between 20 and 45 minutes and gives the learner the opportunity to experience a realistic interview situation. Skills audits are also conducted for any student who requests this.

65

Assistance to enable adults on Access programmes to progress to higher education (HE) is embedded in the curriculum with input from the curriculum manager, student services and student learning mentors to help learners prepare for HE interviews, explore personal finance issues and to plan career options.

66

IAG staff are specifically linked to some adult programmes at below Level 2, such as Skills for Life and Towards Independence, which is a vocational programme for adult students with learning difficulties, and will support learners individually with decisions about their next steps, career progression and help with CV preparation. A session on personal career planning is delivered on two-year programmes towards the end of the first year.

67

The services delivered are supported by a range of resources including handouts and guides, for example on jobsearch. The student services department:

- is involved in the cross-college Mentoring for Excellence scheme
- runs an extensive enrichment activity programme, including the opportunity for volunteering
- organises a visitor programme, for which external speakers attend college on a weekly basis
- supports the college's Mentoring for Success programme.

68

Student learning mentors work with learners on an individual basis, including a number of students aged 19 and over on a range of programmes, using motivational coaching techniques to help to move learners along who are not progressing as well as they might. They may, for example, be struggling with issues around childcare or finance or be lacking in confidence. The mentors help them to plan and organise the work and help to build confidence.

69

These cross-college activities support personal development, but some activities and events also have a career or progression focus, such as the Manchester University Application Roadshow.

70

Progression data is collected from a questionnaire given to all students in the latter part of their programme when focusing on progression planning. This is then followed up by a telephone survey to confirm destination. All those moving through programme levels (for example, Foundation to Intermediate to Advanced) undertake a progression interview.

71

IAG services are publicised to all students at their induction to encourage take-up of the provision, through a newsletter for part-time students and through the virtual learning environment.

Workshops**72**

A range of cross-college workshops are offered by student services staff, which focus both on personal and social education (PSE) issues and themes that support progression. These are open to all learners of any age. Where tutors request, workshops can also be run for a discreet group of learners. In addition to assisting learners with the topic being addressed, the aim is also to:

- enable student services staff to access and influence the curriculum
- promote use of the services and facilities on offer
- increase access to individual learners through an informal contact to encourage take-up of the specialist services.

73

Over 60 workshops were delivered in 2004. They are evaluated through feedback from participants, completed at the end of each event. Topics supporting progression include the following.

- options after college
- student finance for FE students
- personal progression planning
- applying for jobs – labour market information
- applying for jobs – preparing for an interview
- student loans and funding for university
- choosing to go on to university.

Contribution of information, advice and guidance to learner engagement, retention and achievement

74

At Bury College, IAG makes a key contribution to ensuring that learners are correctly placed, so increasing retention and achievement. The emphasis is on checking career goals at the beginning. The college has developed a procedure whereby a team of trained staff, including senior managers, screens applications to full-time programmes to identify mismatches between career goals, educational attainment and the intended learning programme. In these cases, applicants will be given a one-hour general career interview (GCI) to explore these issues. In 2005, 600 GCIs were carried out, of which the IAG team undertook 262. This procedure is important in ensuring impartiality at the point of selection. Advice and guidance staff are also available at enrolment.

75

Research undertaken by the curriculum manager, student services into reasons for drop-out and retention on the college's seven worst-performing programmes identified a number of common trends such as:

- students enrolling late – these are automatically considered to be at risk
- “fashionability”, for example among those applying to Travel and Leisure programmes, who had just been on holiday and wanted to be travel representatives and so on
- students not achieving on the first year of a programme.

76

The results informed the development of improved screening, the identification of at-risk learners at an early stage and the provision of enhanced monitoring and support for these learners, a lot of which is undertaken by the student learning mentors. They liaise closely with the student quality managers, working from tutor reviews to inform the individual approach to help each learner progress. Those assisted have included adults on Access programmes. On occasion, the learning mentors have also intervened at the request of the tutor to address an issue disrupting a programme. For example, a tailored group activity focusing on respect and manners was delivered on a GCSE programme with mainly adult learners. Racist behaviour in a special needs group of adult learners was addressed by an intervention after discussion with the tutor.

77

The financial incentives offered through Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Learner Support Funds have been influential in encouraging attendance and retaining learners on-programme. In 2004, 58 students over 19 received funding for childcare. Retention rates were 97.8 per cent for EMA and 96 per cent for Learner Support Funds.

78

Where senior managers have identified programmes with lower levels of retention and achievement, or with greater numbers of learners being disengaged or at risk of non-completion, Connexions personal advisers have been directly linked into these programmes (including Catering Level 1, Hair and Beauty, and Childcare).

Benefits of matrix accreditation

79

The college was the first FE college to achieve matrix accreditation for its student services provision (in July 2002) and undertook a reaccreditation in May 2005, at which point all student services functions achieved accreditation, including those for staff involved in employer engagement activities, delivering work-based learning and e-learning such as New Deal, library administration and learning, Business Solutions Unit, and flexi-study.

80

Achieving matrix increased the profile of student services in the college.

Assuring staff competence

81

Achieving matrix gave increased respect and recognition to staff who were not formally qualified, but “doing a good job”. Staff monitoring and appraisal were enhanced to meet matrix including:

- introduction of observation for guidance interventions, which is fed into reviews, appraisals and staff development
- annual appraisals becoming more formalised with individual targets
- a system of more frequent reviews for new staff during their probationary period.

Impetus to develop a more learner-centred and holistic approach

82

The process of working towards matrix encouraged staff to look more closely at what the services offered and what they should offer, to produce a service statement. It also brought them together much more as a team, rather than working as discrete services and helped to hone an identity as part of the same department.

83

Prior to the introduction of the national standards for guidance, learner feedback was collected by the college through the student perception of course (SPOC) surveys, as commonly undertaken by institutions at the time. However, the SPOC data did not give detailed learner feedback and was not adequately analysed or used to inform the development of services. To meet the standards, a system for collecting and analysing learner feedback was introduced and fed into a quality improvement cycle. This has also really enhanced customer care.

Business benefits for the college

Inspection

84

Undertaking the process to achieve matrix was a significant factor in the preparation needed to move from the FEFC inspection (where the college stated what systems were in place and so on) to the Ofsted inspection. This required the college to measure and evaluate the impact on learners, for example by collecting learner feedback, analysing this and making improvements in the range of services on offer. Since working towards the national standards and matrix, much more extensive use is being made of learner feedback, which was a requirement for a grade 1 in the college's own self-assessment process. In the last FEFC inspection, the service achieved a grade 1. In the Ofsted

inspection after the service achieved matrix accreditation, support for students was judged as "outstanding" with no identifiable weaknesses. Operational development plans introduced as a result of matrix were used for the self-assessment report.

Providing evidence for other quality awards

85

Much of the evidence used for the matrix assessment also provided evidence for the inspection, and for:

- liP
- Chartermark
- Council of Learning Resources in Colleges award.

86

The Guidance Council (and subsequently ENTO) mapped the national standards and matrix against other quality standards which facilitated this process.

Learner enrolments

87

The number of learner enrolments has increased significantly. Whilst a direct link to matrix cannot be made, the curriculum manager, student services did consider that the culture change that matrix had generated, with the greater emphasis on meeting individual learner needs and customer care (for example, on reception and information services), was having an impact on encouraging new entrants to the college. Improvements were made in managing New Deal enquiries, and the expansion of New Deal, accredited with matrix in 2005, has brought an additional £500,000 into the college.

Increased compliance with legislation

88

Working towards the national standards and matrix included a review of the requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), for example the language needs of those with disabilities. As a result, a lot of training has been undertaken across the college. Increased understanding of the requirements of the legislation among all staff, including those delivering frontline and reception services, should have reduced the likelihood of legal action against the college and should be a positive contribution to the institution's risk assessment.

Improved resources and facilities for student services

89

The matrix report (July 2002) indicated that student services suffered from a lack of space. This was addressed by the SMT and has resulted in dramatic improvements and a new guidance centre.

Acknowledgements

90

Thanks are due to Joe Bennett, Curriculum Manager, Student Services and David Mottershead, Student Learning Mentor.

Case Study 4

Lewisham College: Enhancing and Embedding Information, Advice and Guidance to Support Progression and Developing a Post Exit Service

Introduction

91

Lewisham College is based in South East London and primarily serves its local community: 42 per cent of its learners live in Lewisham. In addition, 46 per cent of learners come from the most deprived areas in the country (the unemployment rate in Lewisham is almost treble that of Greater London). In 2004/05, approximately 14,500 learners were enrolled at the college on its 663 programmes and their average age was 30. In total, 59 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the college's commitment to, and success in, widening participation. The college has gained Beacon status from the LSC in recognition of the quality of its provision.

92

The college provides a high level of support for its students. This is placed at the centre of the organisation's structure and, as the self-assessment report (SAR) for 2004/05 records, "at the heart of the strategic plan". Support is available throughout the learner pathway from pre-entry to post exit.

93

Tutorial processes are considered to be "well-established and effective" in the SAR, and the college has delivered extensive tutor training backed by resources such as a tutor handbook.

94

The college is strongly committed to learner progression, underpinned by the college's vision with its emphasis on the concept of the learner as being on a journey, and the college as a gateway, not a destination. "Progress from learning to destinations with prospects" is one of the college's three strategic goals. Much work has been undertaken to develop progression pathways and diversify the curriculum to ensure learners can succeed and progress. The readiness curriculum, described below, is an example of how students are engaged and supported in their onward journey.

95

The IAG specialist provision is located in student services, which together with enrichment services and learning services make up the learner services department.

Student services: information, advice and guidance pre-entry

96

Pre-entry information, advice and guidance is the starting point on the learner pathway for potential students. This is delivered by:

- the contact centre, answering initial information enquiries and giving advice over the phone, in person, and via the Internet
- the guidance team, via pre-entry interview and the Internet (e-guidance)
- the access team, which advises and supports applicants with additional learning needs and mental health difficulties before they join the college
- outreach guidance at community venues in the borough.

Supporting tutors in on-programme delivery of information, advice and guidance

97

Tutors are supported by the specialist IAG and careers staff in student services by:

- designing and delivering customised group work with learners or team teaching with tutors on subjects such as writing the personalised statement or applying for HE. Specialist staff have targets for classroom delivery
- training tutors in elements of careers education (for example, writing references, careers software)
- participating in working groups with tutors to plan ahead (for example, the HE working group identified the key issues about which tutors needed to be aware and disseminated information about these)
- delivering agreed customised interventions on-programme
- an employability curriculum, which gives students the aptitudes and attitudes to get, hold onto and move on in a job.

98

The Skills for Life and ESOL provision in the adult college uses the careers and jobs team to assist learners in writing letters of application, interpreting advertisements and developing interview skills.

99

The menu of services delivered by specialist staff is included on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and reviewed regularly. In the autumn term, the focus for Level 3 programmes is on applying to HE. In the spring term, this shifts to entry into employment.

Assuring impartiality

100

Impartiality is incorporated into the IAG and delivered through:

- its inclusion in the student charter, a discrete document which also leads the student guide. All students receive copies and it is worked through at induction with their tutors, often supported by the guidance team
- training and professionalism of the specialist staff (all hold the Diploma in Careers Guidance)
- induction and training of tutors
- service standards, which were recently inspected in the college's Chartermark reaccreditation
- Investors in Careers standard.

101

College managers ensure that tutors:

- understand and work within the boundaries of their own knowledge and that they sign up to this at induction
- recognise where specialist staff have greater experience and tutors should therefore refer
- are aware of the breadth of relevant options and range of courses outside the college through training provided by the IAG specialists.

102

Tutorials are observed by heads of school and tutor practice is reviewed by them.

Supporting equality and diversity

103

The IAG provision supports the equality and diversity policy in a number of ways. For example, the specialist staff target partnership development on those agencies working with those in the local population who need additional assistance to enter and progress in learning, such as:

- Deaf Plus
- Redkite – working with ex-offenders
- SABRE – supporting adults with special needs
- Jobcentre Plus.

104

The IAG specialists then refer these learners to the relevant college staff such as the mental health co-ordinator, the Access co-ordinator and staff in the school of supported learning, who identify those who need additional assistance, and arrange assessments and support as necessary for those with disabilities, dyslexia and mental health needs.

105

The college's equalities action plan embeds equality and diversity across the whole college by monitoring and seeking to improve the ethnic make-up of the staff group to reflect the community it serves. In addition, IAG provision promotes women and men into non-traditional industries, the raising of aspirations as a keynote, and monitors usage by gender, race and disability. The college also plays a major participative role in the local ASPIRE partnership in the promotion of widening participation in HE among those previously under-represented, or disadvantaged, especially by social class.

106

Where the college staff use role models to raise aspiration and support, such as learning ambassadors from universities, or their own ex-students, they ensure that these come from a range of ethnic origins.

Supporting learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression

107

The college systematically reviews retention, achievement and progression (RAP) on all its programmes annually. Factors impacting on RAP are identified, and an action plan or recovery plan put in place. Student services support these with customised IAG interventions.

108

Student services collects data on user profile and service usage, including data on the retention and achievement of learners who have accessed the services provided. This is used for planning purposes and in developing the SAR for the department.

Developing "readinesses" – embedding IAG processes in the curriculum

109

The delivery of on-programme IAG at Lewisham College is being embedded into the curriculum through the development of seven "readinesses" focusing on engaging the learner and supporting their progress into learning and work. These are:

- classroom ready
- learning ready
- work ready
- job ready
- university ready
- role ready
- success ready.

110

This approach covers the whole college, so all learners have an entitlement to these "readinesses" regardless of age. It originated from a fundamental focus on the college's primary objective, to ready students for their next stage. The resources and materials for the "readiness curriculum", differentiated for embedding in individual programmes, are available to staff off the shelf, and on CDs, the VLE, Blackboard and the intranet. The readiness curriculum is driven by steering groups. Materials are

produced in partnership between curriculum heads, tutors and specialist staff and updated annually by IAG specialists and curriculum colleagues. The readinesses are at different stages of development, but there is a core offer and set of resources for all with an expectation that there will be some customisation by tutors. It was noted in the 2004/05 SAR that there were indications that the job and work readinesses (employability) were having "a significant impact on retention, achievement, behaviour and progression". The schemes of work have been informed by curriculum development and related initiatives, particularly partnerships with industry, (such as E-skills for Industry with Deloitte Touche). As a result, the readiness curriculum materials are fit for purpose and close to industry standards.

111

All learners are entitled to a named tutor who knows the programme and the long-term aims, and can ensure that learners access resources to support progression. From the learner induction onwards, when personal targets are set, the readiness curriculum is used to raise aspirations and increase confidence. The message given to students is that that "you can be what you want to be", and that the college is there to support learners in achieving their aspirations. The materials used have been prepared to support this objective: for example, the HE packs include a section titled Why HE? (many learners come to college from families with no experience of HE).

112

Tutors are introduced to the readiness curriculum during their induction and they are trained in relevant aspects to increase their confidence in delivery. Additional individual support or peer mentoring is available to new staff, and the IAG specialists will co-deliver as necessary.

Retention

113

The current retention rate at the college is 86 per cent, as is its achievement rate. The retention rate for adult learners is marginally higher at 87 per cent. The main strategy to maintain high retention and achievement is in ensuring the learner is on the right programme from the start. Thus the selection process is in-depth, broad and diagnostic, including, for example, vocationally related assessments, with less emphasis on previous qualifications obtained. Thus fewer learners drop out because they are incorrectly placed. Many of the learners at Lewisham College have difficult and complicated lives, and if they drop out, tend to do so for multiple reasons.

114

The college identified retention rates at Level 3 as an area for improvement in its 2004/05 SAR. Guidance professionals can offer a range of skills and knowledge that support learner engagement and retention. The guidance unit in learner services offers learning and classroom readiness programmes for courses where there are retention and behaviour issues. This is augmented by the guidance team's counselling service, which provides a unique service for students as it is free. The guidance service also supports adult learners in the community via the adult college.

115

In 2003, a problem arose with the BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Performing Arts programme, where the progression rate into HE was poor. The particular cohort of 18 learners was composed predominantly of women of mixed ages and ethnic origins.

116

The curriculum and guidance staff worked together to prepare a new scheme of work titled College and Study Ready and HE Ready by:

- enhancing the readiness curriculum already developed
- using new materials and methods of working.

117

This resulted in a six-week scheme of work delivered for five hours a week through practical learning. An initial focus on the individual by guidance staff was switched to work on the group dynamics. An example of this was the allocation of guidance staff to work informally with the group during their London induction in the third week of the programme, where they use a camera and need to interact with the public. The staff interacted with the group and worked on the way they were proceeding with the project, building confidence and reinforcing key college messages.

118

The level and nature of the intervention produced a very successful group. College staff found that even when there may be more challenging individuals on a programme, producing a good group dynamic can address this. The retention rate was boosted by 20 per cent and there was a 100 per cent progression into HE.

119

The guidance staff were particularly valued by tutors because they:

- reaffirm the messages tutors were giving relating to the college charter and ethos
- have competence in inter-personal working
- understand and take on board the individual rules of each section and relate this to the work environment.

120

This approach has now been used with other groups. Similar work from the readiness curriculum has been piloted amongst a class of students in Construction too. The head of school reported that it has increased retention by 20 per cent among those student beneficiaries.

Progression

121

Every learner has an individual learning plan (ILP) which sits alongside their tutorial record file.

122

The college uses the destination data produced by UCAS to track progression into HE from Level 3 programmes. Intended destination data is obtained from students during the exit tutorial before they leave, and actual destination data collected systematically subsequently.

123

Whilst student services specialist staff try to ensure they deliver to all schools in the college, they will also target programmes where the progression data is lower (for example in Construction, Performing Arts and Engineering). The college works in partnership with the University of Greenwich to promote entry into HE via the Passport to HE programme which allows students to amass UCAS points if they complete linked activities (for example, visits to universities or participation in HE fairs).

Jobs and careers team in student services

124

The jobs and careers team in student services, which provides extensive IAG to facilitate progression, does not differentiate in the services provided on the basis of either age or number of guided learning hours delivered. All services are available to all learners, including:

- appointments available during the day and evening at the main site in Lewisham
- a drop-in facility
- 1.5 days' presence at the Deptford site, where they work with individual learners according to need.

125

The staff visit classes at induction to introduce the services available, and also visit towards the end of programmes.

Post-programme support service

126

The college offers an open-ended post-programme support service to learners who are unsure of their next steps or fail to achieve the required grades to progress as anticipated. Some 7,000 letters were sent out this year, encouraging leavers to ring or email if they needed further help. Approximately 50 learners who were struggling or wanted to return to education dropped in over the summer, mostly for one-to-one advice. Whilst a lot of time and effort was going into helping students plan and achieve their next step, some learners found it difficult to manage the transition. The experience from leavers has informed the readiness curriculum and led to the introduction of ex-learners as role models.

127

A "Guidance Until You No Longer Require Us" (GURU) newsletter is sent out in the autumn, and this also generates contact from leavers whose progression plans had not been realised or who felt they had made the wrong choice for them.

128

In 2004, college leavers were invited to an event to help identify whether there was additional assistance required to facilitate the transition from FE into HE. Feedback from the one-year Access students who had left indicated that they wanted more help in developing study skills such as note-taking and so on. The college therefore:

- publicised and supported summer schools already running in HE
- ran a summer school in conjunction with the University of East London, focusing on this transition, and what it would be like, in order to help prepare leavers.

129

Former Access students, whose experience would be similar to that of applicants, offered an insight into their coping strategies. Learners were also introduced to the range of support services that would be available in HE, and also had the opportunity to meet the guidance staff at the University of East London. For many leavers, peer and advisers' support is very important in achieving a successful transition.

130

Feedback from the event was very positive, but those attending also wanted some specific support in their curriculum area. The college is considering how to respond to this. Improvements in the use of ILPs were also identified as a result of GURU, resulting in changes to the tutor handbook and training for tutors to enhance their skills in setting SMART targets.

131

College staff are now working on a new venture called Mind the Gap, informed by learner feedback, in which they are working with HE tutors to introduce the college's tutoring approach, and assist HE staff in better understanding the guidance and support their FE learners will need to succeed.

What factors enable Lewisham College to deliver high-quality information, advice and guidance?

132

In this approach, the following factors are important in achieving consistency in the quality of IAG delivered on-programme.

- The ethos and vision of the college are promoted by the principal and senior managers, particularly that the learning students are undertaking is part of a journey, so that progression has a greater importance than may be the case elsewhere.
- The beliefs and core values of the college are introduced to new staff at the recruitment stage, reinforced at the corporate induction, and staff are expected to sign up to these and incorporate them into their approach to their work.
- The values and vision are enshrined in the strategic plan and have had a huge impact on the college.
- Student support is seen as central in the strategic plan.
- There is a high proportion of establishment staff (and fewer agency staff), which enables them to become more expert in their roles and the range of skills and knowledge required, including those relating to their IAG responsibilities.
- A common, college-wide readiness curriculum is in use for all learners, informed by specialists and developed with tutors.
- Feedback from students from their ILPs, questionnaires and so on is analysed by central services and informs how the curriculum, services and careers education and guidance are developed and any quality improvements required.

Benefits of matrix accreditation

133

In 2001, the college gained Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB) status for the guidance team, and in 2004 the matrix award for guidance, jobs and careers and the contact centre. Benefits from the award were as follows.

- It encourages staff to reflect critically on their practice.
- It puts a specific focus on IAG for adults.
- The emphasis on learner feedback on IAG and customer service encouraged staff to consider how client-focused the service was, and what more they could do.

134

Students requested more flexibility in the times guidance staff were available and the team has altered rotas to provide this short notice drop-in facility.

Acknowledgements

135

Thanks are due to Judith Banbury, Vice Principal, Learner Services, Alex More, Assistant Director, Student Services, Andrew Jones, HE Co-ordinator and Liz Leek, Head of School, Cultural Studies.

Case Study 5

New College, Swindon: Using Matrix to Develop a Whole-college Approach to Information, Advice and Guidance and Customer Care

Introduction

136

New College, Swindon is a general further education college offering a wide range of full- and part-time vocational and academic provision (excluding Construction, Land-based provision, Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing and Health and Beauty). Distance learning and part-time provision enable progression from Foundation to Advanced levels. Student numbers have increased five-fold since 1996. In 2003, the college benefited from relocating to a brand-new, custom-designed building, by which time 16,725 learners were studying at the college, of which over 14,000 were aged over 19. The college also operates a community-based satellite learning centre in the north of the town, which offers a number of ICT programmes and essential skills. A Business Services Unit, Fast Forward, works with employers on customised provision and collaborates with training providers to deliver work-based training. The college hosts the Open University and a learndirect centre.

137

The college staff work in partnership with nextstep in Wiltshire and staff attend meetings and training events. The college has a contract with nextstep for delivering adult information and advice sessions.

138

The college holds the Chartermark 2005 for excellence in customer service and in 2006, for the fifth time, was reaccredited with iIP status.

Supporting adult learners on-programme and in their progression

139

Course tutors are expected to conduct a thorough and comprehensive induction with all adult students and use a checklist to help structure this process. The quality of the pre-entry information, advice and guidance and induction process is monitored via a "settling in to college" survey.

140

Once learners are on-programme, guidance is principally the responsibility of course tutors and personal tutors, assisted by other cross-college staff, and with personal tutors using the ILP as a focus for discussions. All adult learners have ILPs regardless of the number of guided learning hours. Where students have taken an initial assessment, recording the outcome with the student is one of the main starting points of the ILP.

141

A briefing and guidelines on how tutors are expected to support progression is included in their induction. On adult and community learning programmes, a brochure giving the support options on offer is sent out termly by the director of adult learning to all tutors, together with a memo flagging up potential progression routes.

142

An end-of-course review form is sent out to all learners towards the end of their programme, which helps learners to focus on their next steps. The responses are collated and analysed. In the past, adult learners have been offered the opportunity to seek careers advice from the adult student careers adviser, although this post is currently not filled. Where learners express an interest in another programme of study, these are forwarded to the marketing department. The college has been responsive to learners' requirements, and from student requests has introduced new courses. Examples of this include:

- yoga (including consideration of appropriate accommodation)
- longbow
- aromatherapy
- Over 50s digital photography (beginners) – an improvers' programme was developed as a direct result of a group of students wanting to advance their knowledge collectively.

Benefits of matrix accreditation

Matrix has been incredibly influential in the college.

IAG co-ordinator

143

In 1999, the college started working on an action plan to implement the national quality standards for guidance, then being developed by the Guidance Council. In 2001, the college achieved accreditation against the national quality standards and in 2003, gained the matrix award for its provision in the Swindon area. In 2004, it applied voluntarily for reaccreditation against matrix and to extend this to the rest of its provision. It therefore now holds matrix accreditation for the whole college, including its 14–19 provision.

144

The work towards matrix accreditation has been influential both in attracting additional investment into IAG and in developing this provision for all learners across the institution – both for adults and with a wider influence on provision for younger learners. This has affected:

- cross-college departments such as admissions, marketing, customer services, frontline staff as well as the curriculum areas
- staff competence, IAG-related processes, the curriculum offer and college documentation.

145

The following examples illustrate this effect. The breadth of the impact has been to a large extent due to the introduction of a cross-college planning process and associated action plan, thus involving a wide range of staff and increasing ownership of the work. The plan tracked preparation towards matrix, and the college undertook its own self-assessment before submission for the award. The scale of the college's provision meant that not all staff could come on board at once, so the process focused initially on the IAG and customer service staff and then extended to encompass the whole college.

146

Cross-college IAG guidelines have been produced covering:

- the answering service
- confidentiality
- the maintenance of information
- networking
- referral
- statement of service
- a summary of services and IAG guidelines (for learners) detailing the services offered.

147

Copies of these guidelines are available to all staff via the college portal. Reference is made to these guidelines during staff induction. Staff directly involved in delivering information, advice and guidance participate in the annual review of the guidelines, and are invited to contribute to the updating of the documentation.

148

All learning programmes, without exception, including work-based blended learning and Apprenticeships and the like, operate to matrix standards and common service standards.

Curriculum development**149**

Matrix has been used as a tool to raise retention and achievement. Achieving matrix has encouraged the institution to become more responsive to learner needs and to accommodate them. The IAG training introduced as a result of working towards matrix has given tutors greater knowledge and confidence to feed back to management when new provision is needed.

Foundation Access course**150**

The need to introduce a Foundation Access course was identified in two ways:

- from the improved and impartial pre-entry information, advice and guidance resulting from applying the matrix principles
- from the introduction of an initial assessment to measure both literacy and numeracy levels.

151

The course was thus started in response to a clearly identified need among:

- prospective Access students
- some students who embarked on the Access course and were found to be failing in certain, often quite basic, key skill areas.

152

There seemed to be no provision suitable for these two categories of student. The first Foundation Access course started at New College in 2004, with 12 students starting on the programme, of which 4 completed and 3 progressed to the Access programme. Reasons for drop-out were identified and addressed as appropriate. These included pregnancy complications, ill health, work commitments and the course being too easy, where late application meant that the learner had been unable to get onto the Access course.

153

In the second year of the Foundation Access course, staff transformed their approach to advice and guidance by complying with the matrix standard more specifically. The ways in which the standard is being applied are listed in the appendix to this case study. The post-initial assessment support was further developed in 2005 by the introduction of ongoing diagnostic workshops, where students are supported in developing specific skills to help prepare them for particular courses. This time, 12 learners started on the programme in 2005, of which 9 were still on-programme in November 2005.

Essential skills workshops

154

As part of the matrix action-planning process and cross-college discussions on IAG needs, curriculum managers identified the need for improved diagnostic work on essential skills. Workshops have been introduced for the pre-entry and on-programme stages for all learners (including those aged 14–19) to brush up their skills. Summary information, which includes information about initial assessment and diagnostics, is passed to all teachers to use in lesson planning and increase differentiation. In this way, by meeting each student's learning needs, the college aims to continue increasing success rates.

Training programme for staff

155

The IAG training programme arose as a response from the SMT to a need for cross-college staff development to achieve matrix, and was organised by student services and the IAG co-ordinator. It was subsequently developed further and re-run in 2004/05, based on needs identified by college staff, including data from the evaluation process comprising instant verbal feedback and written evaluations.

156

There is an open invitation for anyone in the college to attend the training, which is delivered in 45-minute, interactive sessions focusing on one topic, usually facilitated by internal staff with occasional external speakers. Participants are asked to come armed with a question. The sessions give those attending the opportunity to discuss if learners have been inadvertently misreferred or incorrectly advised. Of particular value to staff working with adults have been sessions run on working with overseas students, ESOL, TUC training, learndirect and exams. Whilst the IAG training programme has a focus on adult needs, it also covers issues pertinent to the 14–19 age range, meaning its introduction is also improving the quality of IAG given to younger learners.

157

Staff attendance is strongly encouraged and recorded on staff training records, which are discussed during annual performance reviews. The performance review has a significant focus on staff development.

158

This approach to quality improvement for IAG is effective and offers value for money. Staff facilitating the training give their time free of charge as part of their normal role, and punchy, 45-minute sessions ensure that staff are not subject to information overload or away from their normal work for long periods of time. The collaborative and interactive nature of the interventions encourages networking and improves referral. The approach reflects a strong college commitment to staff development. The training programme is continuing into the 2005/06 academic year.

Review of college charter

159

The college charter was originally a document targeted at the 16–19 age group, so other parts of the college, such as community education, had produced their own version. The charter was reviewed as part of the planning process for matrix and the emphasis and wording more applicable to the 14–19 year age group removed. The college charter for 2005/06 is applicable to all learners and used in the whole of the college's provision.

Customer services and admissions

160

A greater understanding has been gained of services offered by the college through frontline staff attending the regular in-house training workshops, developed because of matrix. This has enabled them to become more confident in their delivery of IAG to the college's customers. The personal development of staff has resulted in their gaining NVQs in Customer Service and Administration.

Improved use of resources

161

Flowcharts have been used to build on systems and staffing already in place within the teams to ensure that they are using their resources appropriately.

Improved information and referral 162

Information screens on the customer services reception desk now ensure that more information and help with signage is available to students. If students are not satisfied with the route of their chosen study, they will then be given further IAG by the admissions team, and where necessary a referral will be made. Admissions staff then support and work alongside prospective students in making their choices of study to ensure that they are correctly placed to achieve their potential. This has also identified the need for accurate course details to be made available to them in a wide range of formats.

There is a constant quest to ensure that staff are giving out the right information and that students are on the right programme.

IAG co-ordinator

Marketing 163

Matrix has had the following impact and influence on how the marketing team operates.

- Matrix has ensured marketing practices have become more focused on producing publications. There are now extra quality checks built into all published materials with increased proof runs and they are screened to ensure that they adhere to the principles of impartiality and equality and diversity and so on.
- Marketing staff now take additional time to analyse current leaflets, taking on board constructive criticism to meet customer needs through this process. Learner groups from all markets are used in this process, depending on the particular leaflet.
- The marketing team has put into place processes to meet the needs of all age groups throughout the marketplace.
- Staff consider all areas of the college customer base especially with regard to equal opportunities.

- Staff make as much information as possible accessible through the website to enable customers to make decisions from their own environment.
- An effective distribution system for brochures has been devised to ensure that all prospective customers can access current data.

Review of complaints procedure 164

The complaints procedure has been overhauled by the director of quality as a direct result of planning for matrix accreditation. This was to ensure that complaints were recorded and handled in a more standardised and consistent way. The emphasis at the college is on using complaints as a free form of consultancy and as a means of suggesting quality improvement – not on “name and shame”.

Whole-college factors 165

The following have been identified as factors that have contributed to the achievement of matrix across the college.

- There is a relatively stable workforce turnover at the college at 7.6 per cent (as opposed to the national benchmark of 10 per cent). This turnover figure has declined over the last three years.
- The commitment from the principal and SMT, and particularly the director of quality, has been crucial.
- There is recognition that IAG is a cross-college process, to which most staff will have an input.
- A comprehensive, whole-college action plan has been developed and continues to be tracked.
- The collaborative approach means staff were gradually brought on board, with recognition that they could not all participate or contribute immediately.

Contribution to business success 166

The college has experienced increased and improved performance in the last five years. For example, in 1999/2000 there were 6,500 learners with a success rate of 49 per cent.

167

The figures for 2004/05 demonstrate a remarkable increase in learner numbers (17,300), enrolments (33,400) and success rates (80 per cent), putting New College, Swindon into the top 10 per cent of general further education colleges in the country.

Matrix has been a significant driving force in this progress.

Director of quality

Acknowledgements

168

Thanks are due to Mandy Hamilton, Student Support and IAG Co-ordinator, Lynda Keith, Marketing Team Leader, Christine Ludlow, Admissions Manager, Cilla Paget, Access Course Co-ordinator, Duncan Webster, Student Services Manager, Alan Williams, Director of Quality.



Appendix to Case Study 5: Applying Matrix Principles to Foundation Access Provision (2004 Standard)

Element 1: People are made aware of and engage with the service

Promotional materials provide the key information and this information is included in the Access to HE brochure as well as in the other general college literature. Equality of opportunity and access to this course is without any conditions. The 2004/05 intake comes from a wide variety of levels and backgrounds. Three of the students are ESOL students and the others are coming in from very different levels of ability.

Element 2: People understand the nature of the service

An information sheet gives details of the course, including days and times so that students with children can make childcare and other plans. Details of staffing can be requested and provided a week or so before the class starts. Because the course aims to pick up those students who have started on the Access course, this course is begun two weeks after the start date of the main course. Students may decide to change to the Foundation course by themselves or they may be directed to do so by tutors.

Element 3: People's use of the service is agreed

Staff try to establish suitability for the course through the initial assessments undertaken in numeracy and literacy. All people applying for Access to HE take these assessments. The results are scrutinised with the students and, at this point of pre-entry, some students will be advised to take the Foundation course. In September 2005, five students were advised to start the Foundation. One student joined the Foundation after a week on the main course.

Students who find that the course is not to their taste or to their ability or long-term plans will be given information by their tutor about other appropriate courses or sources of information.

Element 4: People are provided with access to information

The literature and information is clear, readable and readily accessible to all through the college's admissions systems. In addition, the Access co-ordinator and the Foundation Access co-ordinator frequently talk to prospective students on the phone if they are not sure which route to take. The two course co-ordinators regularly share information on a prospective student if he or she seems to be a borderline case.

Element 5: People are supported in exploring options and making choices

At times, the ESOL department will be involved in particular cases and there is regular communication between the ESOL staff and Access staff. For some ESOL students, the Access Foundation course is a good next step up the education ladder.

Element 6: Service delivery is planned and maintained

The course is accredited and moderated by the South Western Region Open College Network and has clearly defined aims and objectives. These include the aim of giving students more opportunity to pick up qualifications, with some units offered through City and Guilds.

The internal management of the course is verified by the visits of the external moderator (two visits a year).

Element 7: Premises and equipment are sufficient to deliver the service

In 2005/06, there was a great improvement in the premises and the equipment used. The learners have a dedicated classroom for all their classes except IT and they have equal access to all college facilities.

Element 8: Staff competence and the support they are given are sufficient to deliver the service

All staff at New College are supported in the same way and receive regular performance reviews and supervision to comply with this element. Staff delivering the Foundation Access are particularly highly skilled in teaching at these levels, and at least two of them are also competent in ESOL.

Element 9: Feedback on the quality of the service is obtained

Feedback on the service is obtained both formally and informally through tutors. Comments from students are treated very seriously and improvements or changes made accordingly where appropriate or possible. Students who proceed onto the main Access course are particularly useful in letting staff know how well the Foundation course worked in preparing them for it.

Element 10: Continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring and action

Staff are constantly looking for ways of increasing numbers and improving the course both in terms of what it delivers and how it enables students to proceed on to other areas of education, learning and employment.

A big review was scheduled at the end of 2005, so that, in conjunction with the Access course directors, staff can make the progression seamless and productive. For example, one of the things that concerned staff was the fact that the Foundation course is only 20 weeks long and finishes in February or March. This means that the students proceeding to Access to HE have a long wait between then and the following September. Staff are trying to think of ways to fill this gap. At present, students are invited to sit in on Access classes and to do extra maths or short courses in IT. They are also given reading lists and other information regarding the course.

Case Study 6

New College Durham: Using an Individual Learning Plan to Encourage the Achievement and Progression of Adult Learners in Community Learning

Introduction

169

(The following data is taken from the 2005 inspection report for New College Durham.) New College Durham, in County Durham, is located in an area that witnessed significant industrial decline in the 1980s with the closure of the mining and steel industries. Approximately 30 per cent of the 152 wards in the county are found within the 10 per cent most deprived in the country. Population density is sparse and whilst the county suffers from a declining birth rate, the older population is increasing. Some 98 per cent of the population was born within the UK, and 99 per cent are classified ethnically as white. In 2004, only 57 per cent of the population between the ages of 16 and 74 were economically active. A relatively high percentage of the population has long-term health problems (often relating to working in local industry and the resulting unemployment), including both physical and mental health difficulties. The educational achievement of school leavers in County Durham is below the national average. In 2003, 46 per cent of Year 11 students gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above compared with 53 per cent nationally.

170

New College Durham is a large, mixed-provision general further education college, offering courses in 13 areas of learning. The college has CoVE status in Travel and Tourism and multi-skilled maintenance engineering. Employment-related programmes are provided for Jobcentre Plus and other agencies. In 2003/04, the college had nearly 9,500 LSC-funded FE students, of which nearly 3,000 were studying full time. Most enrolments are at Level 1, although most full-time equivalent (FTE) students are on courses leading to qualifications at Levels 2 and 3. Some 380 learners are on work-based learning programmes. There are approximately 1,000 FTE students on vocational HE programmes. There is substantial community provision, based at 36 venues in the Durham area.

Community learning

171

The provision of adult learning provision in County Durham was stimulated in 1999 by a successful one-year non-schedule 2 pilot project, subsequently extended for a further year, whereby non-accredited programmes were offered free of charge to specific target groups in the community. The project led to an extension in the scale and scope of community learning, replacing some provision, which had been lost when the colleges were incorporated. Since 2000/01, colleges have been able to continue providing non-accredited courses, but now require learners who do not qualify for fee remission to contribute to the cost.

172

New College Durham started offering community learning provision in 1999. The provision is co-ordinated by the school of adult learning, but dispersed within, and owned by, the whole college, so supporting and facilitating progression. Much of this provision is non-accredited and many programmes are based on the model of two hours a week for one term. Annual enrolments on community programmes are in excess of 3,000. The curriculum offered covers IT, Skills for Life, family learning, visual and performing arts, languages, humanities and lifestyle (which includes complementary therapies, healthy eating and cooking, exercise and so on).

Careers education and guidance policy and provision

173

The principles of transparency and impartiality are included in the careers education and guidance (CEG) policy, as are the promotion of equality and diversity and a requirement to be responsive to the needs of the individual. The need for collaborative approaches and internal or external partnerships is also acknowledged. The policy states that CEG:

contributes to widening participation, retention and achievement by raising aspirations, helping individuals to make realistic, informed choices and to develop career management skills.

174

In relation to on-programme guidance, the policy specifies that all learners are entitled to receive information about the advice support careers (ASC) services and course-based support at induction and to use the full range of ASC services (including career guidance). In addition:

All learners are entitled to progression information and assistance with progression.

175

Until 2005, the ASC provision had been funded partly by the college with additional resources from initiatives such as Aim Higher and nextstep. ASC aims to offer a generic service to all learners based on need. To publicise the service:

- information about ASC services is sent to all tutors
- towards the end of the programme, a letter offering ASC support is sent to all course leaders, where there are programmes more likely to include interest in progression.

176

ASC will provide progression support on a group or individual basis according to need, as in the following examples.

The careers adviser from ASC worked with a group of young adults, supported by social services, who were on a programme offering support with literacy. She delivered a couple of sessions on an informal basis, exploring ideas for possible careers.

By offering drop-in clinics, careers advisers from the college have worked in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and two training providers to provide assistance to those attending a centre on Waddington Street, which is for adults with mental health difficulties, and to assist transition into the college, where appropriate.

177

From 2006/07, funding is increasing, which may allow the ASC to target more provision.

Tutorial policy and provision

178

The college has an overarching tutorial policy, which states that:

The overall aim of this policy is to channel and direct the practice of tutoring in ways which will maximise student achievement and retention, and raise aspirations for successful learning and further study and/or employment ... The full implementation of this policy should enhance the learning experience and promote learner retention, achievement and progression.

179

The entitlement to IAG is differentiated according to the type of programme an adult learner is pursuing. However all learners are entitled to:

- a named tutor (for part-time learners, this is the subject lecturer or member of the course team)
- an induction onto their programme and into the college
- access to assessment of their learning and personal support needs and to referral to specialist support services where appropriate
- access to assistance and help with making choices on progression to further study or employment.

180

On full-time programmes, the IAG element is built into the programme, and this is seen as one of the most important elements. IAG is provided by tutors, with support and input from IAG specialist staff.

181

The success of the policy is evaluated using:

- learner feedback
- profiles of grades awarded to lesson observations of group tutorials
- reports on one-to-one tutorial observations
- staff compliance with the policy evidenced during quality audits
- staff feedback in self-assessment reports
- feedback from external inspection reviews.

Developing the individual learning plan for adult learners

182

The school of adult learning includes a large amount of non-accredited provision. In 1999/2000, a County Durham Learning initiative was established to ensure that the non-accredited provision across the county was of a high quality. This gave an initial impetus to develop robust learning objectives and appropriate documentation.

183

As a response, in 2003, an individual learning plan (ILP), initially called a personal record of achievement, was produced by the head of adult and community learning at the college. Its development was informed by other models in use and the relevant literature.

184

The ILP originated from a desire to be able to demonstrate that challenging learning objectives were being set by tutors, as well as being seen as a tool to aid learner progression. It also enables tutors to track learner progress.

185

The ILP consists of a two-page document including the following sections:

- personal goals
- a grid documenting progress towards individually agreed learning objectives
- personal outcomes
- unanticipated gains from the course (for example, confidence)
- next steps.

186

Personal goals and learning objectives are agreed between the tutor and learner at the beginning of the programme, and a grid showing progress towards these is gradually completed on-programme as appropriate. The process should encourage student ownership of the learning objectives and learners retain a copy of the ILP throughout their programme. The process to introduce and complete the ILP is delivered in different ways according to the context of their learning programme, so for example in some cases more group work is used. It is intended to be personal to the individual so that each will have their own learning objectives. The level of detail entered varies between tutors. In order to increase consistency in usage, the ILP is introduced to tutors in group sessions as part of their induction, and there are comprehensive guidelines to support them.

187

Tutors delivering adult and community learning are expected to use the ILP on all programmes, including those running for only two hours per week over one term, although group sizes on the programmes do tend to be fairly small. It has proved an effective approach to encouraging achievement and progression for nearly all programmes and learners, the exceptions being:

- adults with learning difficulties
- those with mental health difficulties
- exercise classes.

188

Alternatives are being developed for these groups, such as:

- the use of tutor diaries to record progress for learners working on distinctly individual projects in a group situation (for example, art and creative writing)
- large charts using graphic icons for the recording of small steps of progression made by learners with severe learning difficulties.

189

This ILP is not used in Skills for Life programmes as tutors in this area have a well-developed and embedded system that meets the specific needs of these learners.

190

Whilst there was some apprehension prior to its introduction, the ILP was welcomed by most tutors and seen as a tool to help them to plan learning on an individual basis. It offers a structure without being too prescriptive. Initially, some tutors needed support and training in being able to express learning objectives.

191

The development of the ILP was supported by the college's SMT and commented on favourably during the college's inspection in 2005. Although originally designed for community learning provision, other sections of the college have now also adapted their ILPs to this style.

A tool to support learner engagement, achievement and progression

192

The college uses an internal moderation process to build up a picture of what emerges from the document. Thus the internal moderator will not only ensure that there is evidence that the agreed processes have been completed, but moderation checking also enables good practice and staff development issues to be identified.

193

The process and documentation encourage learners at different stages of the learning pathway to focus on:

- what motivates them to learn and what they want to achieve (so potentially increasing learner engagement and ensuring that they are on the right programme, thus reducing potential drop-out at a later stage)
- what personal outcomes and unanticipated gains have been achieved (so identifying and documenting a range of personal achievements)
- what they want to do next (so encouraging and supporting progression).

194

In 2004, a sample of 331 ILPs across 36 programmes was analysed in more depth for a project (Blazey, 2004). This identified the range of learner motivations in undertaking learning and the gains from these, including increases in confidence and new friendships as well as new knowledge and skills. Responses to the question on the next steps varied, but specific categories were discernible among those learners who responded, namely:

- a more advanced course in the same area
- broadening of knowledge in the same area
- something different (specific)
- non-specific, for example, "I definitely want to do more learning"
- applying new or improved skills and knowledge.

195

Some of these comments might reflect what learners might think that tutors would expect. Of the 36 per cent who wanted to develop their knowledge and skills at a higher level:

- 41 per cent wanted to follow a course
- 24 per cent could name the programme on which they wanted to enrol, indicating an awareness of progression opportunities.

196

On arts and crafts programmes, there was a high level of awareness of opportunities for diversification in their general area of interest, for example transferring from creative clock sculpture to other woodwork activities. Another example was to move from courses in manicure to aromatherapy.

Impact on the need for information, advice and guidance

197

Responses are used as a planning tool for curriculum development. The introduction of the ILP has led to an increase in queries on progression to which the tutors can't always respond. They are therefore supported by a named member of staff in each section of the college with a responsibility to provide back-up materials and take referrals of adults interested in progressing onto their provision. The college has produced literature giving progression pathways, but tutors have requested more information about progression, and this is currently being addressed through the development of schematic diagrams showing potential pathways (both laterally and vertically) through the provision currently available, from entry to postgraduate level. These will be used by college staff who play a role in promoting progression and will also be shared with Connexions and the adult IAG service.

Benefits of this approach

198

The college has identified the following benefits arising from the introduction of the ILP and accompanying processes.

- It offers an early indication if a learner is not on the right programme.
- The activity of tracking achievement and progression is more purposeful and systematic.
- There is more reassurance for the college that the service being provided to learners is more consistent and individualised.

- Poor and good practice are identified, which informs tutor training.
- It is a valuable source of data for the college, for example in relation to curriculum planning, tutor training needs, learner motivation and progression.

199

The community programmes have achieved consistently good retention and achievement rates, including those prior to the adoption of the ILP. In 2003/04 these were 94 per cent and 97 per cent respectively. Whilst the statistical data does not therefore show any significant change in retention or achievement, the real gains have been in an increase in learner satisfaction:

...perhaps as a result of the organising effect the ILP has had on both tutors and learners and the stimulus it provides for reflection on the learning that is taking place.

Head of adult and community learning

Transferability

200

College staff shared this documentation freely with other colleges in the county, including the local authority adult education service and the Workers' Educational Association. Several providers have developed very similar documents, amended to suit their specific circumstances. This would indicate that, with appropriate adaptation, this approach to engaging adult learners and helping them progress is transferable to other learning contexts.

Acknowledgements

201

Thanks are due to Daphne Williams, ASC Manager and David Blazey, Head of Adult and Community Learning, in the preparation of this case study.

Case Study 7

Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure: Developing a Network of Learning Adviser–Tutors to support Adult Learning and Deliver Specialist Information, Advice and Guidance-focused Learning

Introduction

202

Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure (SALL) serves a largely rural area with pockets of urban deprivation, and relatively poor and slow transport links between small communities. The ethos of the service includes a strong commitment to these local communities and responsiveness to their needs, as evidenced by the range of provision, extensive outreach and partnership working, such as:

- courses offered in over 700 venues throughout the county
- extensive family learning provision
- collaboration with the local police force to support parents whose children are under anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- involvement with local health professionals in Prescriptions for Learning to encourage involvement in learning as an alternative to medication.

203

Equality and diversity underpin the service, and there are related targets that staff are expected to meet. The profile of the learners has been focused on hard-to-reach people and those with low basic skills. There is a whole-service commitment to Skills for Life, and where appropriate those on return to learn programmes will receive information on basic skills, and be encouraged to take the national tests. The progression of learners on first steps provision, such as family learning, is promoted and facilitated by the completion of action plans and ILPs. All SALL courses use the ILP. Each curriculum area has its own progression pathways documented and published, and each tutor has a copy.

204

The strategic objective for widening participation in the service's learning plan for 2005/06 is:

broad-ranging strategies build on collaborative arrangements to reach non-traditional learners, to extend 16–18 engagement and defined rationale for contracted-out learning.

205

The contribution that the IAG team makes to this is specified in the planned activity. ICT and childcare facilities are limited.

206

Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure achieved matrix accreditation for the whole of its service in March 2003. It identified as strengths:

- partnership working
- linking return to learn courses to IAG
- well-qualified staff
- outreach work
- marketing materials.

Learning advisers

207

The county is covered by a network of 12 part-time and 8.2 FTE learning advisers, who:

- offer one-to-one advice to learners pre-entry and at any stage of the learner's programme at a range of community venues
- deliver group work on-programme for tutors: groups on widening participation or career-focused provision such as family learning are targeted and visited by a learning adviser towards the end of the programme
- tutor on the IAG-focused return to learn provision, which aims to help adults return to paid work, volunteering or further learning
- have extensive links and work with a wide range of groups and other agencies in the community.

208

In 2004/05 3,559 advice interviews were held, 1,307 information episodes took place and 167 group sessions were held. Approximately one-fifth of those interviewed are registered learners on SALL programmes. Some 70 per cent are referred by partner agencies or recommended by word of mouth. If any learners drop out from programmes, they are followed up by staff at the relevant centre and offered an interview with the learning adviser.

209

A particular feature of this approach is the combination of the IAG adviser and tutor role. The learning advisers are all qualified to NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance or are completing this qualification. Those tutoring will also have the Certificate in Education (FE) or a teaching qualification and be working towards Level 3 in Basic Skills to support the embedding of Skills for Life in the return to learn programmes.

210

The assistance the learning advisers offer is publicised through:

- a leaflet (given to all learners)
- the opportunity to request learning advice at enrolment
- a facility on the website offering the opportunity to contact a learning adviser
- partnership working with county council departments, mental health services, children's centres, GP surgeries, housing projects and voluntary sector organisations
- attendance at tutor meetings
- input into the City and Guilds 730 training programme for tutors.

211

The adult learning co-ordinator at each centre acts as a link between the tutors and learning advisers, and tutors are expected to know the name of the learning advisers and to be able to refer effectively.

212

Sessions and clinics are delivered for other agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, with which SALL is a formal intermediary.

213

The learning advisers report to the foundation curriculum manager, who uses data on user profile, participation in learning, and learner tracking and progression to manage the provision and innovate. Data on referral and signposting into the provision informs the marketing strategy. Learning advisers have regular eight-weekly supervision sessions and an annual appraisal, which assist in identifying training needs and increase consistency in delivery. Those newly appointed can shadow or co-tutor other learning advisers.

214

The principle of impartiality is embedded into the provision by:

- its inclusion in the policy statement and initial staff training
- learning advisers' practice: at the point of initial contracting in an interview, it is made clear to the client that the discussion is not restricted to local courses
- the breadth of referrals from initial interviews by learning advisers is checked for any indication of bias or partiality, in the expectation that not all of those advised will enter into the service's programmes.

215

The learning advisers' posts are funded mainly through the main county funding for the service, which is well resourced, with a small grant from nextstep.

216

The commitment of the senior management team to widening participation and to the delivery of high-quality advice and guidance, with learning advisers being seen as a significant vehicle to achieve this, have been major factors in resourcing and developing this approach to providing IAG.

Supporting equality and diversity**217**

The service's learning plan refers to the learning advisers supporting widening participation, and equality and diversity by ensuring that "every learner will receive information about learning advice". Using learning advisers to deliver IAG emerged primarily from the service's outreach provision, when it was decided that more structured advice was needed by some adults at the point of re-entry into learning. This IAG provision also supports the equality and diversity agenda by reaching out to different groups, and agencies

working with more disadvantaged groups, linking for example with Sure Start, mental health teams, family centres, minority ethnic community projects, the Probation Service, hostels and so on. The staff actively target employers where new immigrants are likely to be found, such as those from Eastern Europe working for example in Butlins in Minehead, and in residential nursing homes. These workers would tend to start on an ESOL programme and progress onto other learning. The learning advisers support ESOL programmes by offering assistance in the preparation of CVs and so on.

Return to learn provision**218**

Resources allocated to the local authorities prompted the development of a focused widening participation strategy, from which return to learn provision evolved. This was developed initially in South Somerset and then established county-wide. To a large extent, this guidance-related provision developed from, and was informed by, outreach activities in partner organisations.

219

The return to learn provision, which was started 18 years ago from a Replan initiative, comprises:

- part-time IAG-focused courses run throughout Somerset: Make Your Experience Count, Volunteer Support and Training and Work Experience for Adults
- six-hour workshops developed four years ago, covering: becoming assertive, managing stress, improving job prospects, women and health, communication skills and study skills.

220

The workshops are delivered in a very flexible way, so that they can be offered off-site and customised to the needs of different groups, such as adults with mental health or drug addiction problems, family centres and for young adults leaving care. They were developed to use with groups of adults who did not want to take an accredited 12-week course. They are run as and when there is a demand, offer a taste of learning, and are often used as stepping stones into other provision. They are therefore an important means of engaging the adult population in initial and further learning.

Make Your Experience Count

221

Make Your Experience Count (MYEC) programmes were first introduced in Castle Cary in 1987 and staff then worked with the Open University to publish the course. They are delivered by the learning advisers and for the last 16 years have been accredited as 30-hour programmes through the Open College Network (OCN). Returners often tend to prefer the three hours per week model, which gives them time to reflect on their experiences, but the delivery model is very flexible. The programmes tend to have a particular impact on increasing confidence and often, linked to this, raising aspirations and learner engagement in learning and/or voluntary or paid work. They therefore attract adults lacking in confidence or self-esteem, or those with depression. Every programme is negotiated with the learners within a given structure and reviewed mid-course.

222

Learners are assisted to set personal goals according to their own interests, and these are tracked and reviewed through an ILP. There are formal mid-course and end-of-course reviews, for which all learners have a one-to-one session with the tutor to plan their next steps. Progression is also facilitated and encouraged by:

- explanations by the tutor of various progression pathways and visits to other providers, such as Bridgwater College
- visits from representatives from other agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus and the volunteer bureau, whose representatives explain their roles and what they can offer
- individual discussions on next steps, with these recorded and sent to the foundation curriculum manager for collation
- post-programme support in which people who have completed can visit subsequently for help, for example with completing application forms.

223

To support progression, labour market information (LMI) is accessed mainly from the county council website and LMI Matters: there is relatively little use of the sector skills councils' websites. Learners' horizons and mobility in seeking work or further learning is often limited by their location, domestic commitments and transport links, so learndirect, worktrain (now Directgov Jobseekers) and colleges' websites are regularly accessed to look at job profiles and search for courses. The Adult Directions database is also available for interrogation. Learners print off and take home anything in which they are interested. Progression pathways from the programme often include:

- NVQ as a teaching assistant
- ICT programmes
- Skills for Life programmes
- volunteering as a stepping stone towards paid employment
- Access provision.

224

Some 75 per cent of learners in the Volunteer Support and Training and Work Experience programme achieve an OCN qualification.

Embedding Skills for Life provision

225

Tutors have become aware that many of those coming onto the MYEC programmes are interested in improving their basic skills. Many coming for interview take up the offer of a paper-based initial assessment of their skills. One outcome of the focus on building confidence on MYEC is that a number of those completing would progress onto more specialist literacy provision. It therefore seemed appropriate to try to link activities in the MYEC programme to the Skills for Life provision and try to embed some of this into the programme. Elements of the Skills for Life curriculum are therefore being planned into MYEC course by:

- checking the MYEC schemes of work against the Skills for Life curriculum and making references in the work plan from the core curriculum
- raising awareness amongst learning adviser–tutors about the links between the MYEC curriculum and Skills for Life
- amending handouts to differentiate these according to levels
- making these links more explicit with learners, who complete a learning diary
- numeracy tutors delivering a fun session towards the end of the programme
- enabling learning adviser–tutors delivering the programmes to train to Level 3 in literacy and numeracy teaching.

The tutor's voice

226

Tutors identified the following factors that made the programmes effective and supported learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression.

- SALL gave those interested in the programme the opportunity to meet the other prospective learners at a coffee session before the start of the programme.
- The programme is flexible and activities are tailored to the individual.
- Relationship building is important, and group dynamics managed effectively by setting ground rules at the beginning.
- Tutors work with learners at their speed, giving them the time they need, and enabling them to return for post-programme support.
- Extensive links exist with a wide range of other agencies.
- The programme uses role models to inspire.
- Programmes are delivered in learners' preferred environment.
- Peer support is offered and leads to the development of friendships — "Moving on together can be a factor in progression".
- Small measures are introduced to build confidence, another important factor in progression.
- Tutors discuss learners' progress with the Skills for Life tutor (with the learner's permission).
- Taster sessions are used and learners observe other classes before they commit.
- Learners visit the new premises where their next course is running.

- Tutors meet informally over coffee.

The learner's voice

227

Three learners who were completing the MYEC programme were interviewed.

228

Sandra had been a trained nurse in the Territorial Army, but had become disabled, was using a wheelchair and had depression. She was referred onto the MYEC course and her confidence has gradually returned. She applied for a voluntary role on the local NHS board to represent adults with disabilities, but was initially rejected. With assistance from the staff and advice about the DDA, she reapplied and was accepted.

It's very hard to find anyone to help you: you don't know where to go to get advice. The Citizen's Advice Bureau is good but they don't always know where to send you.

229

Mary had been an agency carer and nurse, but she damaged her knee in a fall, which led to arthritis and she became very depressed. An occupational therapist at a centre in Taunton referred her to a learning adviser, who visited her at home. She subsequently entered onto MYEC and has since taken up a watercolours course at the University of the Third Age and is a volunteer worker at St Margaret's hospice shop for two hours per week.

When you are in a situation you don't know where to go for help. I can see my old self coming back.



230

Sarah used to work in an office and had been off work for a year with depression. She was referred to a learning adviser and recommended to take the MYEC course. She has subsequently taken up yoga, which helps her relax, and is planning to take a course in painting and drawing.

231

Personal gains from the MYEC identified by these learners included:

- confidence building (all mentioned this)
- greater awareness of their own rights and what they were entitled to — *Beforehand, I wouldn't say "boo" to a goose*
- the individual attention they received (for example in planning their next steps)
- being able to come back for help after the programme.

232

They valued:

- the range of people coming to talk to them: DHSS, Jobcentre Plus and the volunteer bureau, who introduced new ideas and options
- a chance to try new things and meet tutors before entering new classes
- the development of friendships — "We all had different problems but we all got on all right"

- being busy to take themselves out of their own thoughts
- being accompanied to a new centre, if unfamiliar with it, and help with sorting out transport
- a chance to come back after the course and talk to the tutor, whom they already know, about other options
- the tutor — “The tutor was a tower of strength”.

233

These learners were regularly referring others to the SALL provision and were thereby becoming informal learning ambassadors for Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure.

Acknowledgements

234

Thanks are due to Judi Morison, Foundation Curriculum Manager, Sally-Anne Herrington, Gill Kensiton and Jackie Buttrick, Learning Advisers, and Sandra, Mary and Sarah, adult learners, in the preparation of this case study.

Case Study 8

Care Training East Midlands: Delivering On-programme Information, Advice and Guidance in Partnership

Introduction

235

Care Training East Midlands is based in Nottingham and works with many adults from deprived communities. The company delivers NVQ training in Health and Social Care and Childcare, and Skills for Life. The provision is delivered on a flexible roll-on, roll-off basis covering both unemployed clients on New Deal, many of whom are lone parents (approximately 70 in November 2005) and some private clients (approximately 30), training to enter work in health and social care. Learners therefore enter work mainly in primary schools, nursing homes and residential homes. The organisation also has particularly good links with Remploy and other companies with a similar focus, through which learners enter work in care homes for those with disabilities and learning difficulties. The company also runs a learndirect centre. Of the three staff delivering IAG in the organisation, one is qualified at NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance, and two are working towards this qualification.

236

The attainment level of clients is very variable. Many clients are unqualified, or have achieved below Level 2 with some work experience. Occasionally they have A-levels, or may have never been in paid employment. Adequate basic skills are now required for the childcare industry, and many clients need to improve their basic skills to achieve at least a Level 1 in literacy and numeracy and a Level 2 for those who wish to work as teaching assistants.

237

The company works closely with local employers in the industry and a broad network of support organisations, job brokers and community partners. The curriculum manager liaises closely with employers to ensure that the programmes reflect what the industry needs. The change in contractual arrangements on New Deal from 39 weeks to deliver programmes to 13 weeks (for Health and Social Care) and 8 weeks (for Skills for Life) has resulted in an increased focus on partnership working, drawing more broadly on the support of other organisations to ensure positive outcomes for the client. Having these links in place is one of the benefits of its membership of the nextstep partnership and matrix.

Delivering on-programme information, advice and guidance

238

All entrants will have had a 45-minute interview and diagnostic testing in basic skills before starting on their programme.

239

Programmes are differentiated to meet the needs of individual learners. Whilst there is no specific model, if aiming to achieve an NVQ, learners will typically be on placement with an employer for one or two days a week and with the provider for the rest of the week. It is a requirement of Jobcentre Plus contracts that each trainee has one day a week of jobsearch. This starts the week after the trainees are inducted and takes the form of a mix of small group and individual work, conducted by the IAG manager or curriculum manager. Some of the IAG support has to be customised because learners are at different stages in relation to their employability and level of attainment.

Many lone parents have developed valuable skills in caring from bringing up their own children, but need assistance in:

- honing and formalising these
- identifying how their skills can be transferred to the labour market
- interpreting them and selling themselves at interview.

240

The focus is on increasing their employability and jobsearch skills. Topics covered include making applications and interview techniques. This may take the form of briefing clients on how to approach an employer and sitting with them while they phone to seek a placement.

241

The company has produced a Passport to Work, which provides a simplified breakdown of the steps clients need to take, both in terms of achievement and jobsearch, to enter employment.

242

Employers and partner organisations regularly contribute to employability and jobsearch activities through presentations, and group and individual work, increasing understanding of what is expected in the workplace and of the employment options available. A representative from a local community support organisation, Working Links, visits to provide additional advice and guidance on entering the job market.

Learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression

243

The company uses the following techniques to increase learner motivation, and hence increase engagement, retention and achievement.

- Identify right from the initial interview the long-term goal and why the trainee wants to achieve the qualification.
- Remind them of their goals if motivation starts to flag.
- Sell the need to achieve the required level of basic skills to be able to find work in the industry.
- Use role models from partner organisations to explain issues regarding Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.
- Underline the value and benefits of being in work both to themselves and their family.
- Celebrate success. The company gives this a huge profile and values intermediate steps towards the learning goal, such as in literacy and numeracy. It has a wall of success in the learning centre and focuses on individual attainment in the newsletter.
- Use the Passport to Work to motivate learners and demonstrate progress in achieving the necessary steps towards employment.

244

All learners are given an exit interview, at which their next steps are clarified and actual or intended destinations recorded. If a learner has not found work, a referral will be made to one of the partner organisations. Learner progress is tracked post exit at 4- and 13-week intervals. The company has found that tracking learner progression in this way has resulted in new enrolments, where former learners or their new colleagues enrol on IT programmes. The company currently has eight new learners working to achieve Learning Disabilities Awards Framework (LDAF) status as a result of a referral from a former client, prompted through follow-up.

Impact and benefits of matrix accreditation

245

The organisation achieved matrix accreditation in May 2005, and has since won an Excellence award.

Access to new funding and renewal of contracts

246

Achievement of matrix is considered to have been a factor in obtaining other contracts and awards. The organisation now has a contract to deliver IAG services for nextstep and the learndirect contract has been renewed. The company has won two new contracts for training learners from ethnic community groups.

The fact that matrix goes on our bids is a powerful tool.

Sales and marketing manager

Changes to interviewing practice

247

Before the company began to work towards matrix, the initial interview lasted about 20 minutes and focused mainly on providing information about the programme to the applicant. The process was altered to extend the time allocated to 45 minutes and a more client-focused approach was adopted to include discussion of the career goals, interests and needs of the client, for example checking on where the client wanted to be in six months' time.

Collecting feedback

248

The company has designated a quality week, which is dedicated to obtaining feedback from learners, funders (for example, Jobcentre Plus) and partner organisations, such as nextstep. Feedback from learners is obtained through quizzes focusing on:

- the quality of the provision and the extent to which it meets their needs
- their level of understanding of the programme from the induction process.

Extension of partnership and networking arrangements

249

The development of the networking links required by matrix has brought about a number of benefits for provider and learners, including improvements in referral both:

- at the point of entry if an applicant is not suitable for the industry or the provision inappropriate
- at the point of exit if a client has not found work and needs further assistance from job brokers.

250

For example, links have been extended into the nextstep partnership BEGIN, which offers basic skills. The organisation does not deliver ESOL training and in the past staff have found it difficult to support clients with these needs. The improved links have resulted in referrals to ESOL specialists, so improving the services to learners.

Matrix has really helped in understanding the value of networking.

Sales and marketing manager

More targeted marketing

251

As part of preparing for matrix, the company surveyed organisations that were referring potential applicants to them to check on the adequacy and quality of their marketing materials, gaps in information, understanding about eligibility and so on. The feedback was very useful and led to significant improvements being made to the materials produced.

Learner enrolments

252

A change of contract required the company to treble its intake if it was to achieve the same annual turnover. Matrix helped it understand the importance of ensuring that the front-end and exit procedures and systems were effective. The increased number of partners, improved networking arrangements, marketing materials and a more systematic approach to tracking clients post exit, have all been significant in increasing the number of appropriate referrals. More agencies and their staff are making referrals than ever before. The conversion rate between applicants interviewed and enrolments onto the company's programmes has increased from 60 per cent to 90 per cent.

Acknowledgements

253

Thanks are due to Alex Ford, Sales and Marketing Manager, for help in the preparation of this case study.

Annex E: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Full form
ACL	adult and community learning
ALP	Association of Learning Providers
AoC	Association of Colleges
ASBO	anti-social behaviour order
ASC	advice support careers
CEG	careers education and guidance
CoVE	centre of vocational excellence
CPD	continuing professional development
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DPA	Data Protection Act
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
FE	further education
FTE	full-time equivalent
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GAB	Guidance Accreditation Board
GCI	general career interview
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GURU	Guidance Until You No Longer Require Us
HE	higher education
IAG	information, advice and guidance
IiP	Investors in People
ILP	individual learning plan
LAL	Lancashire Adult Learning
LDAF	Learning Disabilities Awards Framework

Acronym	Full form
LEAFE	Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults
LIF	Local Initiative Fund
LMI	labour market information
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSN	Learning and Skills Network
Matrix	matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance
MYEC	Make Your Experience Count
NAEGA	National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults
NAMSS	National Association of Managers of Student Services
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OCN	Open College Network
PSE	personal and social education
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency
QTLS	Qualified Teacher, Tutor or Trainer in the Learning and Skills Sector
RAP	retention, achievement and progression
RARPA	recognising and recording progress and achievement
SALL	Somerset Adult Learning and Leisure
SAR	self-assessment report
SMT	senior management team
SPOC	student perception of course
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
VLE	virtual learning environment
WBL	work-based learning

Further information

Visit the LSC online at www.lsc.gov.uk for up-to-date news on the LSC and education and training in England. There's a lot more here about our policies and activities and you can access online versions of LSC publications.

Learning and Skills Council
National Office

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 024 7682 3675
www.lsc.gov.uk

This publication was produced in partnership with



©LSC July 2006

Published by the Learning and Skills Council.

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes, on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Learning and Skills Council website:
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSC Help Desk: 0870 900 6800

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-060381